

THE QUEEN LIVED

by Jacob Clifton August 1, 2008

Doctor Who Season 4 - The Rise & Rise of Donna Noble, Chiswick, London, UK, Earth, Solar System. We look back at the entire season 4. Spoilers ahead for those who haven't watched.

Dear Donna:

The world is wrong.

If you could see yourself the way I see you, it would be like nothing so much as a collection of stories. An infinite collection of stories, like a book. Like an infinite library: End one and go to the next, and on like that forever. That's what you deserve. But if you could see yourself the way I see you, we'd all be in trouble. Instead, you see your life as all one story. Commonplace, nothing special. That's how [it works](#): we see our stories, for themselves; we live them. We don't see all the stories around them, moving through time, twining around each other. It's beautiful, but we can't ever see it. That's one of the differences between them and us. It's one of the things wrong with the world: we see the little things, not the big picture. Sometimes we miss the small things, too.

You'll get up tomorrow and you'll go to work at whatever unhappy place you've settled for, and you'll paste on a smile and try to avoid the wrath and the wandering hands of the workplace; you'll dress up tomorrow night and you'll go drink at whatever unhappy place you've settled for, and you'll paste on a smile and wait for someone to tell you you're not alone. And the next day, and the next. And you'll be so tired, and you'll ask yourself why there's nobody there to catch you, or take you out of this place. Your mother will call, and make you feel terrible; your grandfather is getting old. There's a sadness in his eyes, just next to his faith in you. He knows, too. He knows the world is wrong.

There are things that words can't do. That they're not designed to do. Our brains can't operate them properly. It would sound like gibberish, like the nattering of the sibylline [oracles](#), or worse. There are truths: emotional, even cosmological, that can't survive being squished down into our petty words. And the people that can hear them, they're crazy: like survivors of a war, like people who got conned out of sanity, people for whom time and space stopped making sense. In the place where words don't go, time and space don't matter. So instead of driving each other mad, we use images, and metaphors.

I want to tell you a story, about how the world went wrong. I will tell you stories, so you don't go mad, and so I can tell you a thing that is where the words don't go.

After the double-glazier place let you go, you got a job at a place called HC Clements. You were a temp. You liked it that way. You were only ever a temp because you were drifting; you're still drifting. You were worth better than what you were getting, so you refused to commit to them. But you never reached higher than that. "Clemency" means a lessening of the penalty, without forgiveness of the crime. That's what you were doing to yourself.

Your crime was loneliness. If you'd seen it for what it was, the penalty would be heartbreak, and you couldn't let that happen, could you? So you settled for the exquisite dull ache, and knowing that your mother's voice was right. And if you'd forgiven yourself, seen the crime and yourself for what it was, and who you are... Too scary. Too much like jumping. So you punished yourself just enough, by staying where you were.

There's a moment in your history, that morning in fact: you were sitting at a crossroads, with your mother in the passenger seat. You had a very simple choice -- you like those best; they demand the least -- and you knew you had the choice. Turn left, and drive to HC Clements, find a man, become a bride. Turn right, and settle for a full-time position. But you're a temp. That's all you are: never settling, always hoping. Never trying, always existing. You're wizard at it, look at you: 100 words a minute, all-knowing, all-seeing. You strive to be the best, even in the half-light. The temporary solution, until the wind blows you away again. They used to say, "You're not gonna make the world any better by shouting at it," but you knew you could try. Imagine if you'd put that amount of effort into being something more.

You didn't know -- nobody does -- that death lay at the end of both those roads. You had another choice that morning; you had an infinite number of choices. To serve your punishment, or forgive the crime. You chose to wait; to continue to hope for someone else to save you. You knew -- didn't you? -- that you were nothing special. You really believed that. All that attitude, all that lip. Because you honestly believed. Shouting at the world because no one was listening. You found yourself a man at HC Clements, badgered him into telling you he loved you. And somewhere inside, you knew it was a lie. You didn't really mind. How could it be the truth? But you could look into the mirror and say it: I am not alone.

You got engaged. Oh, not to that man. He was eaten by giant spiders. What? It's okay, they were just baby giant spiders. No, I'm talking about another man. He put a ring on your finger. For better or for worse. You weren't the first, and he admitted it, but there was something about him. And when he asked you to visit the stars with him, you told him goodbye. For six whole months. Too close to living, too dangerous. Nothing temp about it. Nothing safe. The Empress called you a wonderful key, and a holy bride in white. You were both. You are both. Nothing temp about that. So you settled, again, and built your life up again. Such as it was. You wrapped yourself in your loneliness.

In the library of your life, your grandfather remembers: You were about six, and your mother said no holiday this year. And off you toddled, all on your own. Got on a bus to Strathclyde, they called the police and everything. Where's she gone, then? Where's that girl?

You had that one day, with him, and you swore you were going to change. You were going to do so much... And then you woke up the next morning, same old life. Like he was never there. Oh, you tried. You did try. You went to Egypt, barefoot and everything, but it's all bus trips and guidebooks and don't drink the water, and two weeks later, you're back at home. Nothing like being with him. You must've been mad, saying no like that. You knew it. You kept saying no. You're still saying it. I love you so much. But how mad must you be, to say no to every beautiful second?

Something dangerous had happened, hadn't it? He'd shown you that light in your grandfather's eye wasn't madness, but something better. Your grandfather was in love with the stars, and the day you got engaged you finally understood why. You went looking, all over. How do you find the Doctor? Look for trouble, and he'll turn up. You looked everywhere: UFO sightings, crop circles, sea monsters. And you found them all. He opened your eyes. All those amazing things out there, you believed them all. It was easier that way. You knew the Doctor would save you, from this life you'd trapped yourself in. You didn't put half that effort in, at HC Clements, did you? (Just the first man to pour you a coffee, and you jumped the train immediately. And then all that effort went into Lance.) He'd put a ring on your finger, hadn't he? For better or for worse. "I'm not drifting," you said. "I'm waiting." For the right sort of man. Again. For any kind of man, to take you away from all this. No turning left, no turning right. Just waiting. No punishment and no forgiveness. Just waiting.

You finally found him at Adipose Industries. You must have liked the idea of that place, no? If he hadn't lit a fire in you. All the reward with none of the effort: the fat just walks away. The easy way out. Exactly what you were looking for. You went looking for him. Which is to say, everyone that comes to Adipose is looking for the same thing. They wanted to lose weight measured in pounds and kilos; you wanted to lose weight measured in years, and loneliness, and sadness. They found a little pill, and you found your little Doctor-man. And oh, he was happy to see you. I wonder, were you wearing his ring?

"One more thing, before dying. Do you know what happens if you hold two identical sonic devices against each other?" No. "Nor me. Let's find out." And the Doctor said, "Mum and Dad have got the kids now, they don't need the nanny anymore." He knew more than he was letting on; he was thinking of Mad Martha, who fancied him. Blind Martha. Charity Martha. Wonderful Martha, strong Martha, soldier Martha, who didn't need the nanny anymore. Martha, who learned to save the world with the sweat of her brow, walking a world

gone wrong, saving it one story at a time. All he wanted was a mate; you promised you would never mate with him. Funny old world.

"Children! Oh, my children, behold. I am taking you home... And you will fly! Up you go, babies. Up you go! That's it, fly away home!" said Miss Foster. And "That's Donna. And that's him! That's him! Go on, girl! Go on, get up there!" said your grandfather. The proudest man in the universe.

I was proud too. You'd jumped, again, after being bitten once by your own punishment. You knew you deserved more. But you still had no idea how to take it. The Doctor is many things: a man, a traveler, a helper, a God. Rose loved the man, and this was her tragedy and her triumph. Martha loved the God, and learned to be a helper. But you, weren't you just traveling alongside? You didn't love him; you liked him. Maybe that's the key to a good marriage.

Magic comes when the world outside our heads doesn't match the world inside. Sometimes it's dark magic: that man at work that gets enraged, or enrages you, no matter what he says. That face you can't kick out of your dreams. The ones we do violence to, the ones we cross lines for. And love, too; love is magic. You put all your crap on somebody else, all the wonderful things inside you, you apply them to this strange face, and think you can be saved. You never did it, though. You never let him be anything other than what he was: you saw both hearts beating, all the time, you saw the dark bits and the shining ones, and you took care of them all. And that's great, but it still leaves you out. You're still vacationing on somebody else's dime. You're a traveler, but you're unsatisfied with Egypt: you want the stars. You wanted somebody to hand them to you. That's dark magic, too: you needed the world to be more wonderful than it is, and you waited in silence for the moments that it was. You were in love with magic.

In Pompeii, you were still working it out: what is it, to be a God? To be a helper, and a traveler? He'd seen what it was, to control events, to ignore the trees for the forest, the big picture for the people in it, but he needed you there, again, to stop him. You wanted to pull everybody into the amphitheater, ring the bells, save everybody at once, but he explained it. The enormity. "Every waking second, I can see what is, what was, what could be, what must not. That's the burden of the Time Lord, Donna. And I'm the only one left." And he was. But your question was equally important: "How many people died?" He begged you to stop, then, but you wouldn't.

"Not this time. Pompeii is a fixed point in history. What happens, happens. There is no stopping it." Says who? Says him. "What, and you're in charge?" TARDIS? Time Lord? Yeah. "Donna, Human, no!"

But this is the gift of Pompeii. Every single oracle tells the truth. Even those who don't inhale. You and the Doctor told the people there that you were Spartacus: He was Spartacus, and you were Spartacus. Heroes,

interchangeable, self-sacrificing, brave: He was Spartacus. You were Spartacus. They thought it meant you were married. They weren't wrong.

"A name is but a cloud upon a summer wind. But the wind is felt most keenly in the dark. But what is the dark, other than an omen of the sun? I concede that every sun must set..." All true. And the Doctor's answer? "And yet the son of the father must also rise." Every oracle tells the truth.

"A seed may float on the breeze in any direction," said the oracle. And he was talking about you. But nobody should know the story before it's told. (Spoilers!) The Doctor said, "It must be awful being a prophet, waking up every morning: 'Is it raining? Yes. I said so.'" All you need is somebody to tell you to come in out of the rain.

"Do you know I met the Sibyl once? Hell of a woman. Blimey, she could dance the Tarantella! Nice teeth. Truth be told, I think she had a bit of a thing for me. I said it would never last, she said, 'I know.' Well, she would... Let me tell you about the Sibyl, the founder of this religion. She would be ashamed of you. All her wisdom and insight gone sour. Is that how you spread the word? On the blade of a knife?" In the barrel of a gun?

In Pompeii, in Rome and Sumer, anywhere they could still touch God, they celebrated the *hieros gamos*, the sacred wedding. Take on the garment of a God, channel and bring him into you, and by union with a human you provide fertility: for yourself, for the land and for the people. You save the world. The Sumerian Kings would lie with Inanna's High Priestesses. St. Theresa built a ministry on it. The Wiccans play it out, every spring, with their daggers and their chalices.

But in all this truth, the oracles couldn't see the volcano. The Pyroviles -- that's who was orchestrating it -- had stolen its power, and were ready to build an army. There's nothing the Doctor hates more than armies, so he realized he had a choice. Or more properly, you had a choice: set off the volcano, naturally, invert the system and destroy Pompeii... Or let the world perish in fire. "If Pompeii is destroyed then it's not just history. It's me. I make it happen." He was infecting you, even then, wasn't he? Like huon particles in a coffee cup, making you special without you even knowing it. Taking what was already there, and adding something else. Something he had no right to add.

And you were returning the favor: you called to him, of Gallifrey, that perished in flame. "Don't you see, Donna? Can't you understand? If I could go back and save them then I would, but I can't. I can never go back." And if you cannot save the world, you said: "Just save someone." And so he did. And your name was written in the stars, and in the household crèche. The first monument, to the Doctor and Donna, was born of that choice. Your memory is spread across the universe, Donna. That's how special you are. I am only telling stories.

The Ood Sphere. A planet of beings so calm, so united, so peaceful and weak that they're born with their brains in their hands. They sing unendingly, in brilliant harmony. Holding nothing back. The libraries in which you and I spend our time, our selfish little stories: they'd never comprehend that. Not until the Second Great and Bountiful came, and took away their songs.

He knew you didn't want to hear the songs that were left them, but you insisted. And he put his hands against your head, like a father to a blessed daughter, like a husband to his holy bride, and showed you the truth of the world. The broken songs of their hearts broke yours, and you begged to retreat. Back into the library, back into the selfishness, away from their pain. You weren't built for this; for the pain inside of everything. For the everything inside of everything. But he was. That's his story, and yours. "I spent all that time looking for you, Doctor, because I thought it would be so wonderful out here," you said. "I want to go home." You already were.

"I don't understand," you said. "The door was open, why don't you just run away?" *For what reason?* "You could be free." *I do not understand the concept.*

You were horrified. How could someone stand there, door wide open, and not accept her freedom? It broke your heart. You were always sympathetic to a man or woman caged. You were always the one screaming when the doors were getting closed: as long as it was someone else whose weakness was exposed. Their spirit was locked in a circle, a jail, and it drove them mad. They served up horror, in a cup. Like huon particles, they changed their captor into something like themselves. But their captor, he was somebody's son too. "The circle must be broken," they said, "So we can sing." And you and your little Doctor, Spartacus and Spartacus, the Doctor and Donna Noble, set them free. They still sing about you, too: the Doctor, Donna, who heard a song on the wind, and followed. You will never be forgotten.

Then he let you drive. His TARDIS! I know! He let you put your hands on that old blue angel, and you steered her for awhile. Just long enough for a call from the [Doctor's daughter](#). Well, one of them. Mad Martha, soldier Martha: calling the Doctor back to Earth, presenting her accomplishments and her fiancé like a child with a trophy. She was engaged, too. And she was a soldier -- oh, he didn't like that! The Doctor hates armies, unless they are his own. He was born in war and fire and destruction, twice in succession with more to come: he hates the war because it rides in fire along his blood. His two hearts beat against it.

But that's fine for divinity, isn't it? To disappear, when mortal pain intrudes? It's left to us, to the children of time, to carry on in his wake. And that means battle, strategy, time's arrow moving forward in a single direction, choices with consequences... All the things a lonely God doesn't really understand. Things Martha learned in his absence, and puts to use even now. He can afford to get bitchy about it, because -- like all children do -- she's covering his ass. Like

Harriet, like Rose, like Astrid. There are things he will never understand, because he is a God. He sees the world turning, the fixed points in time, the potential for darkness and for greatness, but he doesn't know the slow path. How hard it is to save the world with just your hands and sweat.

This is what it is to be a soldier: to be the one to do the things that other people must not do. In this case, in the case of the children of time, to do the things the Doctor can't do. Not because he's better, or a hero, not because he's stronger or weaker, but because they are happening here, now, right in front of us. And here and now are never what's in front of him. He can never truly love, because love's desperation arises from the death of moments. It is sweet because it ends. And he never does. When he loves, it is half-hearted.

Rose/*Eros* never knew that -- *the Doctor* never knew that, with her -- which is why their story never really ended. Martha/*Philia* figured it out with a quickness, and it burned her strong. But you... There is no desperation in your love, because there is no passion in it. It is just love. It's just the library of love: *Agape*. It is what all love becomes.

That year on the *Valiant*, it wasn't the Doctor's fault. Martha knew that. But she also knew this: he burns. Like fire, and ice, and rage. He's like the night and the storm and the heart of the sun. Martha knew what he is always almost turning into: she knows the beating of the God's heart, in that tiny man's body. How it wants to burn with you. You went to visit your mother, and grandfather. He made the Doctor swear to keep you safe. I wonder if he regrets that now, somewhere alongside?

"That's my Donna! She was always bossing us 'round, even when she was tiny. 'The little General,' we used to call her." We all have war within our hearts. While he was giving you a key to the TARDIS, Martha's was given form, on Earth: a clone, a child of Sontar. The Doctor asked her if she'd called her family, during the emergency, and she asked him why she would. "The gas? Tell them to stay inside." And Donna, he said, "She's gone home. She's not like you, she's not a soldier." Not a daughter of the war. Martha's feelings were hurt, but it was true. And Martha nursed her soldier-self to sleep, into death, and put on the Doctor's coat, and became another daughter. Returned to being a doctor. And the last words clone-Martha spoke were love: "All that life."

He doesn't turn people into things. That's a misconception. He doesn't change you. He doesn't make you stronger, or better, or smarter, or faster. He doesn't make you kinder, or make you love yourself more, or believe in yourself more. He doesn't give you anything you don't already have. He can inspire, and he can love, but nobody on this earth can change you. Nobody ever made you greater, and nobody ever made you crawl. Martha knew that: knew she was a soldier because she was a soldier. But it hurt to see him say it, because he'd been the one to inspire her. She was saving the world. I think the more he fought it, the more he complained about the guns and the salutes and the armies and the

battles, the prouder she should be.

Guy's clinging to the roof of a house, and the flood is rising. He prays, he lifts his voice up to God in song. And a helicopter comes by, and the guy says, "No, it's cool. God's got me covered." And the water's rising, and pretty soon the guys with the boats are floating by, at eye level. He's got himself curled around the chimney, praying his ass off. And one of the boats stops, grabs a branch from the live oak in what used to be his backyard, and tells him to hustle. But at this point, it would be kind of rude, right, to get in the boat? Wouldn't that be like standing God up? So they roll their eyes, and float away. He gets smaller and smaller, in the distance, on the top of his little house, until they can't see him at all. And he keeps waiting. Hoping. And this big strapping superhero with delts to spare and an ass Midshipman Frame would be proud of arrives, touches down ever so lightly under a yellow sun. And the guy, he's tempted. Because this is it, Earl. This is his last chance. But God's got him covered.

And when the guy ends up in heaven, the first thing God does is slap the everloving shit out of him.

It's not a joke. Your only duty in this lifetime is to be magnificent. Or, as John Green (possibly the most charming man in the world but definitely the best YA writer) would say: "Don't Forget To Be Awesome." That's not God's problem. And it's certainly not the Doctor's. Any second you let go by without being awesome is a second you've wasted, and you can't ever get it back.

So where's she gone, then? Where's that girl?

I can tell you these stories all night, and I probably will, but I don't think you'll believe me. Not even in that "metaphor is the lie that tells the truth" way. Not even in that "I heard the nicest story the other day" way. It's too deep. She's gone too deep. She's waiting.

I love the Sontarans, maybe even more than the Dalek. I love the Dalek because they don't stop, and I love the Sontarans because they are hardcore. They are so hardcore it's silly. But as I'm telling you this story -- a three-parter, about the Doctor's daughters -- it's interesting to think about why here, now, so close to the next one. So much about war, and soldiers, and turning people into things. Facts on the ground. You can't explain war to God, even when you're fighting in his name: he won't get it. He doesn't need to. War is a fact of life, and time, and he doesn't understand those things: he *is* those things. He's so terrified by Martha, and by Genny, because of what they represent. Because they represent action. He'll always love Rose because he's half a man, but he'll always love you because, I think, you don't act. You're like him, a traveler. He cheers you when you do, but I think on some level he knows you'll never be like them.

Donna, you need to be more like them. We were given our time in this world to make a difference, Doctor or no. Life, like war, is a fact. You have to grab hold of it. Less screaming, more doing. He'll never get his hands dirty because compared to us, he doesn't have hands.

When Davros sets up the comparison, then, he's wrong by being right. He says, in the end, that the Daleks are all his children, and the Companions are the Doctor's children. And they are tools, and weapons, and things. But the difference between an army and a family is choice, and love. Davros would never understand that every single one of them -- even you! -- was there by choice, because of love. That they represent a family. The kind of family that can work with the angel and tow a whole planet home. The TARDIS was built for six pilots, for a family. He's been doing all that work alone. Davros would never understand that, because he always does the work alone.

I love the Daleks because they never, ever stop: they only want to kill. They're what happens when you draw the line from mercy to justice and out into the dark places. But that unity, that scarce feeling, that darkness: that came from Davros. That's what his soul is like. And the Doctor? I love the Companions, I love you, because you never, ever stop: you only want to save the world. What happens when you draw the line from innocence to experience, and on into grace? No contest.

Of course, what's better than a metaphor is the real thing. On the planet of the Hath the Doctor had another daughter. A new daughter, Genny. She reminded him of everything he'd lost -- Gallifrey, the Academy, family -- and everything he feared about himself. War. The scars and madness of the war were implicit in her, and they were radiant. Down to the five thousandth generation. It was a paradox that you were there at all, Donna: the TARDIS brought you and Martha with him to the planet before Genny ever existed. But if you hadn't come, she never would have. This is the way a Time Lady should be born.

But this is no ordinary war, of course. She's not an ordinary soldier, in an ordinary war. Five thousand generations, in seven days... How would that look to a Time Lord? How do we look? Five thousand human generations, all those infinite stories: hard to remember how long it takes, for us. Even harder for the children of the machine: "I have a body, I have a mind, I have independent thought. How am I not real? What makes you better than me?" That was all she had to say, for you to love her.

"If you really wanted peace, couldn't you just stop fighting?" Spoken like a God. "I'm trying to stop the fighting."

"Isn't every soldier?" Spoken like a human. Spoken like every Companion that ever walked those halls, or heard those heartbeats.

Of course, this is only a story, so he turned out to be right: in the muck and the

filth and the stinking baseless hatred, there was beauty: a mistaken myth, a story about life and time, was forgotten. You helped him uncover it, and a world was born. You thought all the buildings were in ruins -- that time, and life, had passed you by -- but they were only empty, and good as new. Waiting to be populated.

They'd mythologized their entire history, until it was all they thought they were. And oh, you sympathized, didn't you? Totting up your facts and figures, discerning where it all went wrong. Exactly the moment they forgot the breath of God, and turned upon themselves: you could calculate it to the day. They could have turned left, but instead they turned right. They lessened their punishment, but didn't forgive their crime. They fought a war for clemency, instead of redemption.

Lady Clemency Eddison was hosting the party, with her husband the Colonel. Attending were writer Agatha Christie, Professor Peach, Robina Redmond, and the Reverend Arnold Golightly. Things went poorly. There was a forgotten son, the miscegenated offspring of an alien and a woman. There was a thief, traveling incognito. There were at least two poisonings, a few giant wasp attacks, and a thousand Christie references. The saddest was the truest, but you didn't know it yet: all the wonderful experiences and stories she had that weekend, that vanished from her mystery after the fact. She and Lady Clemency had imprinted on the Reverend, you see, a certain form of story: the murder mystery. It was all he could do, once he had been reborn: live out the fantasies of a woman he never knew. He thought he was trapped inside it, and he burned to be released. Stories, children, and unnatural influence.

You loved Christie, oh! How you hated her self-effacing way. She said aloud, "I've no answers. None. I'm sorry, all of you, I'm truly sorry. But I've failed. If anyone can help us, then it's the Doctor, not me." And you hated it. You promised her, again and again, that her books would be read forever. That she would never, ever be forgotten. She couldn't believe you; she could barely hear you. You couldn't hear yourself.

But you were right, and why? Not because some bloody Doctor dropped out of the sky and took her hand. Not because God sent her an enchanted pen and ink to write with, by parcel post:

"Plenty of people write detective stories, but yours are the best, and why? Why are you so good, Agatha Christie? Because you understand! You've lived, you've fought, you've had your heart broken. You know about people, their passions, their hope and despair and anger, all of those tiny, huge things that can turn the most ordinary person into a killer. Just think, Agatha! If anyone can solve this, it's you!" She still didn't believe. Even after she solved the case, and drowned the son just like his father, and saved the world, she didn't really believe.

"And tomorrow morning, her car gets found by the side of a lake. A few days later she turns up in a hotel in Harrogate with no idea of what just happened. No one'll ever know." All those heroic deeds, all that brilliance, that real-life suspense and crimefighting: she'll never know. Only the Doctor will know. And yet somehow, she managed to have a magnificent life. Imagine! Having never met the Doctor, she still managed to be magnificent.

"Saw the world, wrote and wrote and wrote. She never thought her books were any good, though." You asked, noted, suggested that she spent the years wondering. Donna, you asked him. And he said, "Thing is, I don't think she ever quite forgot. All the stuff her imagination could use..." But far in a future library, look at the copyright page: facsimile edition, published in the year Five Billion! People never stop reading them. Christie is the best-selling novelist of all time, and she never knew. But then no one knows how they're going to be remembered: All you can do is hope for the best. Maybe that's what kept her writing: the same thing that keeps him traveling. Traveling onwards: every single oracle tells the truth.

Then came Moffat: a beautiful, ancient building that was also a girl, and a chance at love for the Doctor. You were kind, and you were considerate, and there was a whole hour about River Song. I like River Song. She deals with his complete freeze really well, deals with your future really well, and in the middle she uses screwdrivers and squareness guns with aplomb. And she dies. And because the Doctor loves her, or trusts that he will love her one day, and likes her well enough now, he takes her out of death and into light.

I like her because I think she represents a point in time in which the Doctor becomes enough like us, and we become enough like him, that the veil hangs not quite so heavy. That we can play with those screwdrivers and what they mean, without risking death or loss of memory. It's not given, to men and women, to love Gods. Not now. We can't see what they see, and they have a devil of a time seeing what we see. I think Rose taught him to be a man, and you taught him what that means, but I don't think he can ever love, with both his hearts, until that day.

In broad terms, the entire process of anima development in a male is about the male subject opening up to emotionality, and thus broader spirituality, by creating new paradigms as he encounters/projects new forms of femininity. The first is Eve, the Maiden: the emergence of the object of desire; has the troubling habit of simultaneously generalizing all females as evil and powerless. If you haven't met a guy stuck in this place... Well, trust me. You have. I don't know what else to say.

That's where Rose started. She fell in love with him, and he fell in love with her. But only with one heart. It's the heart the Master could never break, and it's the heart that keeps him tied to Earth, now Gallifrey's gone. Not to get all mass-market paperback on you, but just imagine for a second there was a

person, both divine and human. With all working parts. Sent from the heavens, to remind us of our redemption. And maybe he met a girl, they say, and maybe they fell in love. When Rose goes back home to the last time, that last painful time on Bad Wolf Bay, she's not getting cheated: she's taking home the part of him that she loves. The only part that can love her back. A whole man, albeit with a Chiswick accent, but one who knows nothing of divinity, and everything to do with war. The man she fell in love with.

The second is Helen, as in Helen of Troy. In this phase, women are viewed as capable of worldly success and of being self-reliant, intelligent and insightful, even if not altogether virtuous. This second phase is meant to show a strong (untempered) schism in external talents but still lacking internal qualities (inability for virtue, lacking faith or imagination). You want the key to boys? This is it. Halfway through the rubric, and they're still not convinced women have an internal sense of ethics. Welcome to being the Other, if you hadn't noticed yet.

So at the time that he was most broken and befuddled by the loss of his one mama-duck in all of creation, the Maiden/Mother who carried him from violent childhood to manhood, and he was totally bereft, he found himself a new girl. And oh, she loved him; and oh, he didn't care. That'll show them. And he spent a year traveling with her, with his ass totally covered -- that's an American expression, the ass-cover -- because he thought he could lie in the bed with her, and never touch her. He'd learn to be a God, a Master, and without Rose that was the only thing that made sense.

The third phase is Mary, named so because of duh. At this level, females can now seem to possess virtue by the perceiving male (even if in an esoteric and dogmatic way), in so much as certain activities deemed consciously unvirtuous cannot be applied to her. It's not all about sex, or Evil Mommy syndrome, or puppy-eyed romance with Mary. She's just a lady. Maybe you marry her. Maybe she thinks she's just a temp, and you've stepped back enough from the magic that you don't understand why that's a problem. Maybe enough so that when she says she's nothing, it pisses you off. Maybe you try to tell her, over and over, that she's already wonderful. That you can't play the part in the four-part animus development drama that is *her* lot, because you see her the way she really is. Which is beautiful.

The fourth and final phase of anima development is Sophia, named for the Greek word for wisdom. I kinda feel like we've talked about that before. Complete integration has now occurred, which allows females to be seen and related to as particular individuals who possess both positive and negative qualities. Ya know, like, human beings. Most males reach this stage sometime between 18 and death. But I mean, if you never die...

The most important aspect of this final level is that, as the personification "Wisdom" suggests, the anima is now developed enough that no single object

can fully and permanently contain the images to which it is related. If you were River Song, which would you rather be? Building a life in the Matrix, or dead forever? Now, I would not choose the gauzy tampon commercial that the Matrix provides her, if I had the choice -- but who's to say she didn't choose? Maybe she just wanted to rest. I think the only real cruelty would have been to put a Matrix Doctor in there with her. That would have been bad. Maybe next time she walks down to the duck pond, there's going to be new bad guys to fight, or ruins to excavate. You can have everything you want, in the kingdom of the mind. You just have to reach for it.

I think I didn't like this story, at the time, because it seemed so uneven. The first part was definitely one of the best things I've ever seen, and full of promise, but I didn't enjoy the second half. Too much telling, not enough showing. And it seemed actually unbalanced, as though nothing of import were going on. But I think I was wrong. Because this wasn't another story about the Doctor and Donna, it was a story about the Doctor and then a story about Donna, with the Library story lurking around it. A Doctor/Donna story, if you will. And I think that because of the circumstances in the way that came about, I was biased as a viewer, because what happened to you wasn't real. Not real like the Vashta Nerada and River Song's whole Niffenegger deal. So even though as much time was spent with you, in the second half, as was spent with the Doctor in the first half, it didn't count. Wasn't real.

Except, of course, the entire point is that it was: to you. If instead of telling you these stories you were here, watching, with me, I wonder what you would think. I think you would agree: Donna's in a mysterious Matrix kind of world, so it hardly counts. Donna's finding time passing all around her so quickly it's terrifying, Donna's driven mad by her experiences in the library, Donna's the recipient of a wonderful stuttering husband, with no effort at all, who loves her dearly. She receives everything she ever wanted, and has it taken from her. And she's expected -- I expect, we expect, you would expect -- to get up and get on with it. Move along to the next adventure.

And the fact is that you did, Donna. Thinking that Lee, your magically perfect husband, was too perfect to really exist, that you didn't deserve that kind of luck, you moved right on. And I mean, half there. You knew you were better off in the life you were forging. But it was a sign of things to come: the rescue, the damsel, the way he gave you meaning. It was a lie. Even though he was real, and you were real, the whole thing was a dream. It didn't change who you were, when it was over: you still had your hands, and your feet, and your ability to be awesome. You cleared that level in one, girl. Took Rose thirteen tries. Be proud of that, at least.

No wonder you chose to sit the next adventure out. You'd just had your whole story told back to you, in machine cruelty. You'd just been rescued from it, by your own hand and by the kindness of a limited woman, to whom you had been

kind. Oh, that was a heartbreaker, when Evangelista died. And when she killed you in her turn.

There's a theme throughout the stories I'm telling you, having to do with cleverness. What it does and what it doesn't do. Rattigan, he thought his cleverness exempted him from morality. Evangelista, she went from not very clever to awfully clever indeed. But let me ask you, who would you rather spend time with? No matter how smart they made her, they didn't change the essential quality of her. Her goodness, her desire to help. Midshipman Frame can tell you: All they do in Hufflepuff is make things with glitter and safety scissors.

That's not a consolation prize. The Hufflepuffs among us are the greatest among us, because they're not trying to be special. They're not trying to be clever. They know that cleverness isn't what's important. They know they're special and don't need to be told, over and over and over, like some of us. Some clever boots among us, we spend our whole lives trying to be told how special we are. They just know. Donna, you should be more like them too. And stop thinking it's a bad thing. Everybody wants to be smarter because they think it will make them more special. It won't.

Because speaking of the pitfalls of cleverness, both within and outwith the story: "Midnight," I do not like, so I will not tell you the story. There are moments, I suppose, but really it's just one moment repeated *ad infinitum* by a **very talented actress**, followed by amateur sociology hour and a heavy-handed yet strangely light-on-depth seminar on group dynamics. Yes, the fear of what's unseen is the fear that controls us, and yes, people act like dickholes when they get in groups, and yes, lesbians are scary when they get dumped. Yes, old people suck and are hateful, and young people are awesome but easily manipulated. I agree with these things because they are self-evident. But I don't need forty-five minutes of that when I can just look outside. I think I would have been more excited by it if I were A) claustrophobic, B) afraid of crowds or public speaking, or C) capable of being scared by things on TV. I like how it took apart every crutch the Doctor has, his arrogance and reliance on his cleverness and blarney skills -- but did not so much enjoy being told that was exactly what was happening, over and over.

I get that it's a tonal piece, and the dialogue stuff really adds to the atmosphere. But I'm not able to go there. Maybe it's from doing this job. Show me Lesley Sharp repeating dialogue for a half hour and I will marvel at her technical efficiency and I will be amazed as always by the amazing angles of her face, but I won't get scared. So I don't have a lot to say about it. It's like "Blink" last year (or "Dalek," or the Cybermen two-parter): I get why it's awesome, I just don't have the thing that gives me entry and makes me freak out about it. Or maybe I just missed you. God knows if you'd told me what "Fires Of Pompeii" or "Partners In Crime" were about, I would have laughed in

your face. You made those live. (Sadly, not even you could save the final act of "Planet Of The Ood," which had me rolling regardless.) This one just left me feeling like I was at a workshop for actors and playwrights, which I hate. Too many ideas, not enough art.

I am trying to think of things to say about "Midnight," if it's not obvious, because I don't want to keep going. We're almost done. One more story, and I will say goodnight. And maybe you'll read this, maybe you'll see the words but they won't help, maybe you never read it at all. Maybe you're somewhere these words can't go. Maybe that's better; it's certainly safe. But Donna, if you could see yourself. If you could see Donna the way we do, it would be like an infinite library: every stall: such comedy, and such humanity. Such depth of feeling. Such beauty, in every movement and every word. And you just walk away.

That's how [it works](#): we see our stories, we live them. We don't see all the stories around them, moving through time, twining around each other. It's one of the things wrong with the world: we see the little things, not the big picture. Sometimes we miss the small things, too. You'll wake up tomorrow and you'll go back to your unhappy life, the life you've settled for. You'll paste on a smile, and wait for the day to end. And there will be a quiet sigh, a crack, a fault, a tiny little place, an ache, in your heart. And you'll wonder where it came from: what [memory](#), just out of reach, explains this sadness and this loneliness. This feeling that things should have gone better, this trapped feeling that now they never will. Just for a moment; it'll hardly qualify as a thought. It won't be a memory. Because that's something you were born with: we all were. It's the keyhole.

There are things that words can't do, places words don't go, where time and space don't matter. Where everything that ever was and will be, is, all at once. Nobody's meant to hold that, or to feel it. So instead of driving each other mad, we use images, and metaphors. We tell lies. Stories. This is how the world went wrong. This is how you fix it.

Your next adventure with the Doctor took the form of a horror, a quasi-racist Yellow Peril encounter on a ching-chong stereotype planet. And you were tricked, by a Trickster, into creating a whole world. St. Eco and St. Calvino bless us and keep us, you've got stories within stories in your stories. And in this world, you didn't choose hope. You chose to settle for even less than that. And the world ended, on your word.

But the way you earned your wedding -- two years too late! -- was the way in which you saved the day. You took a look around yourself, and you hid and you cried and you whined, you let them do such awful things to you, but in the end you'd had enough. Enough pain, enough horror, enough of being controlled and abused. You believed, out of nowhere, in a better world. You sacrificed yourself, and saved everyone. You closed the loop, and in dying, you ended a world. You wrenched time back into alignment, the way the Doctor would. And

you did this in a world where not only did you never meet him, but you also never saved him. And the results were ugly. Horrific, in fact. But the truth remains that in your death, you saved the world. And how? It's nothing to do with him -- he was already long dead -- but by saving yourself. End your fantasy, and the world is changed. Fix yourself and fix the world.

And the Cloister Bell was ringing, and the TARDIS was freaking out, and the Doctor was more terrified and more in love than you'd ever seen him. You spent hours, days, getting at the secrets, when you returned. You helped him find where the world had gone, and all the other stolen worlds. With your brilliance, and your wisdom, and your instinct, you pushed him further than he'd ever gone before. You smiled, in the midst of the greatest war, and pointed him to Rose. You watched him die. And you were cut off, locked up in the TARDIS like a tower, while the war raged on. It was such a terrible war, with such a final enemy, that grace was required, in the form of two Doctors. And you gave birth to one of them.

Karen Young tells it: "Abu yazid Bistami... approached God as a lover. Sacrificing his own desires to become one with the beloved. Yet the introspective disciplines he adopted to achieve this led beyond this personalised conception of God. As he approached the core of his identity he felt that nothing stood between God and himself; indeed, everything he understood as self seemed to have melted away."

"I gazed upon al-Lah with the eye of truth and said to Him: 'Who is this?' He said, 'This is not I nor other than I. There is no God but I.' Then he changed me out of my identity and into his Selfhood... Then I communed with him with the tongue of His face, saying: 'How fares it with me with Thee?' He said, 'I am through Thee; there is no god but Thou.'" How was it? You'll have to ask Rose. But it's interesting information. In alchemy we call it the marriage of the Red King and the [White Queen](#). They create the most precious thing of all, in their union. And it brings fertility and life, for everyone.

Mother, wife, lover: all the things you'd never been before. All the things you thought you wanted. You were all of them to him. Your breath gave him life, gave us all life. You were the Source. Because it's never a one-way street, is it? In touching the divine, you became more than yourself. Doctor Donna, the first human Time Lady. Burning up inside, with knowledge and power. You were the greatest thing in the universe; you were the most important woman in any of them. For a moment.

It doesn't last. It never lasts, for the same reason Gods and men can't love yet. Ask Rose about both of those. The Doctor can't get his hands dirty because he doesn't have hands, the way you and I think of them. We are the hands. And Rose's Doctor, the Best Wolf we could call him, he was born of the hand, cast off in war. Down in time, the slow path, with the rest of us. Life is fatal; for

those of us with human bodies, so is the divine. The sun and the moon, but why do they hurt? Because it's not a dance that ever stops.

If Rose is Mary Magdalene, what are you? A Goddess, written across the stars, in the household gods of Rome and the songs of the Ood. Your history is myth, and your kindness is legend. And you knew, once you'd taken Davros and his demons off the map, you knew what would happen next. The way it burns. But you're still human, and you were afraid. I'm so sorry for that. You didn't deserve the pain, or the fear, or the knowledge that you were dying. That any solution to the problem was a worse death still.

In the space of five minutes, the Doctor went from family, surrounded by family -- you, his closest, most faithful friend, and Martha, and Rose, and Jack, and all of them -- to completely alone. More alone than he'd been since the war. All of those whistling cracks and empty places were filled; he'd found something to live for. The TARDIS was singing her heart out, more powerful than she'd been in eons. And then it was gone, just like that. This man, who loves nothing more than to travel with the ones he loves, lost everything. He ends the season in darkness, staring out. Having killed the one he loved most.

In the moment he put his hands to your head, like a father to his daughter, like a husband to a wife, like annunciation, what were you thinking? That this is the last time you would feel this: this strength, this beauty and this power. The last time you would be anything, or mean anything. That he would take it all away, and you'd be left with nothing. Just some girl, getting on. Just a temp. Nothing special. Once you'd tasted it, Donna, how could you ever go back? That warmth around you, the power inside, the way even time and the TARDIS wrapped you in their embrace. You couldn't.

You'd go mad, like Caan, if they asked you to do what Rose did, and step across the Void. You'd touched too much of the world. You couldn't be allowed to remember it. We can never remember it. Every one of us has touched that, and every one of us has forgotten it. And the hole that it leaves is the song that we share.

The definition of madness is the inability to filter out the false from the true. But everything's true, given enough time and space: that's the difference between us and them. That filter is a biological necessity. If we knew everything there is to know, we'd die. The fact is, we do. Our bodies know better: they call it dreaming, and they force us awake. Stay there and become mad, become chimerical, abominable, something that cannot exist. The secret marriage cannot go on indefinitely: permanent direct contact with the divine is another definition of madness.

Nobody wants Donna Noble for an ex-wife! Give us peace.

These are just stories. I'm sitting here in my army man pajama pants wondering

if you're even going to read this, or if you'll even care, or understand what I'm trying to tell you with these stories. Because I love you, and I know that wherever you are, you could be doing better. You could leave the Library. You could be living.

I just wanted you to imagine that you met a man, the most wonderful man in the world, and that he showed you the stars, wonders and terrible things, all the majesty our world can muster. All the kindness and the brilliance and the bravery that lies in you. That he, among all of us, was capable of teaching you how wonderful you are, every second of the day. That you have a better choice than to turn right, or left. Look up at the stars, or laugh. Or jump.

I want you to imagine that you were chosen, of all the women and men in the world, to go on a wonderful adventure. Because of who you are, and what you can become.

And then I want you to forget that he never existed. In story school they teach you a very simple thing. First there are facts: "The King Died." Then, there are plots: "The King Died, The Queen Died." And then there are stories: "The King Died, The Queen Died Of Grief." But this isn't a story, it's your life. That's not how it works in the real world.

Dear Donna, the real world sucks. The world is wrong. So fix it. *The Queen Lived.*

So live.

TRAVELER'S HALT

by Jacob Clifton June 30, 2009

The Next Doctor - While there will be a next Doctor, this is not actually the Next Doctor. Although, frankly, our lame-duck Doctor could do a lot worse. And will.

The [TARDIS](#) jumps into your average quaintly Victorian Christmas tableau: snow, wreaths, lampposts, cobblestones, stallmen shouting out their wares. It's like Disneyland, clean and shiny. It smells like FAO Schwarz and roasting chestnuts. John Smith is overjoyed by it, the crazy clothes and top hats, and applies himself vigorously and interminably to the task of appreciating it. For the purposes of this narrative, "enjoyment" means wearing a doofy grin and spinning around to cutely madrigal Christmas wassailers while the camera unendingly spins around him. It's going to be one of those for sure.

I mean, who doesn't love Christmas, like as a concept, and the whole knotted-scarf *allo guvna avanappy Christmas* Scrooge McDuck chim-chimminy thing especially. But you're not going to make it fresher or more lovely by forcing David [Tennant](#) to pretend he's having a half-hour aneurysm, or giving us a case of the Cloverfields, which is why it's important to pay attention: London was never like this. Christmas was never like this. Christmas is a lie; London is an engine that runs on the blood of children and the silence of women.

"You there, boy! What day is this?" The kid plays along; he doesn't know he's playing along. Nobody in London does. "Christmas Eve, sir." What year? "You fick or somefing?" John Smith jumps: "Oi!" he says. He doesn't even hear her, in his voice. "Just answer the question." It is the year of Our Lord 1851. "Nice year," he says. Especially if you like chess. "Bit dull..." he muses, which is Rosita's cue to start screaming for the Doctor.

John comes running up, and pulls her back: a statuesque black woman with a firm set mouth that tells about her bravery. He pulls her back, she continues to ignore him, screaming for the Doctor. There's something behind a door, smashing itself against the wood, trying to desperately to get out. He cautions her to get away, but she's not ignoring him. She has no time for nutters; she is a Companion to the Doctor. "No, I'm standing right *here*," Smith says, and offers her a hello. She fixes him to the wall with a glare like Donna's: "Don't be so stupid, who are you?"

They do the whole Doctor Who's On First for awhile, and then the Doctor shows up, much to Smith's surprise. "Where the hell have you been?" Rosita asks, and he laughs, telling them not to worry. "What have we got here, then?" And when John asks him who he is, he just smiles. "I'm the Doctor." Smith stares. "Simply the Doctor," the Doctor says, charming. "The one, the only and the best. Rosita, give me the [sonic screwdriver](#)!" John Smith is confused to the point of

hilarity as she does. "Now, quickly! Get back to the TARDIS!" John's jaw drops further. "Back to the what?" The Doctor asks him to step back: "This is a job for a Timelord," he says, and John Smith's eyes bug out. "Job for a Whatlord?" The creature bursts free, like a memory. "Oh, that's different," says John, as the Doctor says, "Oh, that's new!" They hold out their screwdrivers: "*Allons-y!*" They cock eyes at each other. Credits.

It's shaggy, shapeless and black, with a face like a mask of metal; it stares at them and what it sees goes somewhere else, on a screen. Rosita hides behind the Doctor, who brandishes his screwdriver happily. "I've been hunting this beast for a good fortnight. Now step back, sir!" It jumps past them, to the wall, dancing up ten yards or more before looking back at them. John Smith recognizes the idea of the thing, if not the thing itself: "Some sort of primitive conversion, like they took the brain of a cat or a dog." He knows it's the Cybermen, again. So does the Doctor.

"Well, talking's all very well. Rosita? I'm ready." Ever faithful, she hands him the lasso, and he nabs it easily. "Now then," he says, speaking from a deep and nearby place in his memory, "Let's pull this **timorous beastie** down to earth." It crawls up the wall, sickening, and pulls him up instead. John crosses the distance to the wall easily and adds himself to the rope as Rosita screams at them both. The beast jumps, intruder window, and the boys dangle. The Doctor suggests that John Smith let go, but he promises never to let him out of sight: "Don't you recognize me?" He doesn't. The Doctor doesn't recognize John Smith at all.

"This is hardly the right time for me to go through my social calendaaaaaaa" he screams, as the beast pulls them up and through the window, across a long and dusty empty floor. They are boys on sleds, on holiday, laughing as they crash through the house toward the other window, where the beast intends to jump again. The Doctor wraps the rope around his hands, refusing to let go, a grin still dancing on his face. As they reach the crisis Rosita chops the rope ahead of them, and the beast disappears. John Smith and the Doctor stand up, aching, and laugh. They throw their arms around each other.

Rosita drags her axe back to them, scraping along the floor, and her look is so darkly dangerous that it sends the boys off in fits again. She leads the way back downstairs, to the courtyard. "Well, I'm glad you think it's so funny. You're mad. Both of you. You could've got killed!" The perfect team. "But evidently we did not!" says the Doctor expansively, and John Smith falls in love.

"Oh, I should introduce Rosita. My faithful Companion, always telling me off..." John Smith knows, and commiserates, to another hideous glance from her, like *What*. He considers her briefly: "Rosita? Good name. Hello, Rosita." She gives him no ground. She has no idea what he sees, when he looks at her: Rose's name and heart, Martha's humble strength and style, Donna's wise and absolute rejection of all bullshit. If the Master's wife was an inversion of all Companions,

the Next Doctor's is a composite of them all. There's a reason but he can't see it yet. All it does for now is hurt: "Now I'll have to go and dismantle the traps!" she shouts, and heads off stomping while the Doctor shrugs. "All that for nothing! And we've only got twenty minutes till the funeral, don't forget. Then back to the TARDIS, right?" Oh, Spaceman.

"Funeral?" John asks. Is that what this is? "Not my own," the Doctor jokes. "Not yet." John Smith inspects him. "I'm not as young as I was. Well, not as young as you were when you were me..." The Doctor's confused. He really doesn't remember John, at all. Everything he did, lost to thankless memory. "But you're the Doctor! The next Doctor..." John's eyes devour the Doctor, his entire body, everything about him. Trying it on, with his eyes; thinking of his son across the Void. "Or the Next-But-One...? A future Doctor anyway." He considers spoilers, asking how it happened, and rejects them aloud. "Although... I hope I don't just trip over a brick, that'd be embarrassing. Then again, painless. Worse ways to go, depends on the brick..." It will. Everything will.

"You're gabbling, sir," the Doctor notifies him, not unkindly. "Now, might I ask, who are you exactly?" John Smith realizes he's fucking up, spoilers from the other side, and shuts his mouth before opening it right up again. "No, I'm, uh... I'm just Smith, John Smith. But I've heard all about you, Doctor. Bit of a legend, if I say so myself." The Doctor is wonderful, adorable, with his chest puffed out: "Modesty forbids me to agree with you, sir... But yes. Yes, I am."

"A legend with certain memories missing, am I right?" The Doctor is surprised; the way John Smith's eyes pin him to the wall. "You've forgotten me," he says. The thing they can't afford to forget, lest they repeat their old mistakes. "Great swathes of my life have been stolen away," the Doctor agrees, sadly. "When I turn my mind to the past, there's nothing." Going back to the Cybermen's appearance, in fact, precisely. "Masters of that hellish wall-scuttler and old enemies of mine, now at work in London Town. You won't believe this, Mr. Smith, but they are creatures from another world." His language is comforting, virile and sure; John is sweetly patronizing: "Really? Wow..." The Doctor is proud, of his secret world, and continues excitedly. "It's said they fell onto London out of the sky, in a blaze of light. And they found me," the Doctor relates, looking into a street fire and seeing something there, something terrible and unreachable. "Something was taken. And something was lost."

"What was I like?" he suddenly asks, turning himself from the memory. "In the past?" He stares into John's eyes, searching for clues that won't get him too close. "I don't think I should say. Sorry. Got to be careful with memory loss. One wrong word..." John Smith walks heartless through the snows of London Town: left one across the Void, the other in Chiswick. This Doctor is more like her than any of them know, yet. *One wrong word...* She's with him all the time.

The Doctor wonders how it is, that John Smith's so inured to talk of Cybermen

from the stars. He doesn't even blink. "Ah! *Don't blink*, remember that? *Whatever you do, don't blink?* The blinking? And the statues? And Sally and the angels? No?" They are odd men. John Smith is an odd man, and in the future will be an odd man still. The Doctor suddenly jumps, afraid of compounding Rosita's displeasure: "The funeral's at two o'clock!" He bows graciously to John Smith, and reminds him not to breathe a word.

"Aw, can't I come with you?" John Smith begs; he has no question of doing anything else, but it's a chance to keep working on this new problem. "Far too dangerous," the Doctor shakes his head. "Rest assured, I shall keep this city safe!" Running away, he turns back. "Oh, and, er... Merry Christmas, Mr. Smith." Mr. Smith wishes the Doctor a Merry Christmas in turn, and when the Doctor runs he follows after, to make good on it.

Oh, wondrous steampunk Cyberfactory done right. Steampunk has lost its meaning: you get either generic fantasy -- or delightful New Weird, if you're lucky -- wearing steampunk clothing, or those damnable codebreaking pirates that dorks are now dressing like. The usual trickledown, but still a little embarrassing for everybody. Cyber Leader comes in with his domino face and discusses with his compatriots how "Cybershade 16" has made contact with the Doctor: "This man is dangerous. This man is our enemy. This man is the Doctor." Even the baddies are letting John Smith off the hook this Christmas.

Cyber Leader walks through the Cybermen toward a lovely dark woman. "Plans for the Ascension demand a successful intervention. Is everything in position?" She quirks a smile at him. (Her face is all planes and lines, beautiful and cruel. She's been in London Town her whole life, and paid the price for not giving in to that engine of blood. Too pretty for a mudlark, too smart for a wife. Her story is long and ugly, and best left between the lines. Suffice to say it started when she was young, and never really ended. Suffice to say her imagination and intellect have been warped by the status quo the Cybermen will overturn; the status quo of Victorian Christmas sing-alongs, yes, but also of, and entirely supported by, mudlarks and slatterns and the madness of cities. Like any terrorist, her grievance is sound: it's her methods that are unacceptable.)

"Well, that's rather dependent on you! All I can promise is to do my best." Parameters of which, she clarifies for Cyber Leader in his own language, mean she "will operate at maximum efficiency." And in return for her aid? "You will be heralded in the new age, at the Court of the CyberKing." They all salute. The Cybermen have an allergy to gold and a deficiency of imagination that leads them here: they are in the Court of St. James and thus their lives become a court. "The CyberKing will rise," they chant; she doesn't know what she means, what sort of engine CyberKing designates; she has been trained by life and men to sexualize every utterance and moment: "Indeed. How like a man." (Once, with quirked smile is liberated, but twice is silly and three times a deeper issue.) "Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a funeral to attend."

It's snowy, and beautiful in another way. Black draft horses pull a black carriage to the graveyard, trailed by pallbearers in black top hats. The Doctor and Rosita watch them go from near the Reverend's house; the snow's thick and getting thicker and you can't see things fifty yards away. John Smith, for example, skulking and watching them just as they're watching the mourners. "The late Reverend Fairchild, leaving his place of residence for the last time. God rest his soul... Now, with the house empty, I shall effect an entrance at the rear while you go back to the TARDIS." They talk about how breaking into houses isn't women's work, but saving her life is women's work, and finally he yells "The Doctor's Companion does what the Doctor says!" Which makes John Smith grin, because no she fucking doesn't, and all three of them know it.

The Doctor bends to the task of breaking in, but John Smith's already inside: "Oh, front door. I'm good at doors." He asks if the Doctor's breaking into the house with his sonic screwdriver, and the Doctor holds it up proudly. "That's a screwdriver. How's it sonic?" The Doctor raps his screwdriver against the doorframe: "...It makes a noise?" The Doctor is showing cracks in his performance.

"It started with a murder," the Doctor says, rifling through Fairchild's things, and John Smith nods, happily. The worse it gets, the more he loves it. "I mean, bad. But whose?" Mr. Jackson Lake, mathematics teacher from Sussex, came to London three weeks ago, subsequently "died a terrible death." Was it Cybermen? "It's hard to say, his body was never found, but that was the first of the secret murders, which were followed by abductions. "Children," the Doctor says in a hush, "Stolen away in silence."

The Doctor and Mr. Smith are in the home of the latest murder victim, Reverend [Aubrey](#) Fairchild. "Found with burns to his forehead, like some advanced form of electrocution." John Smith crosses his arms, and nearly his eyes, trying to work it out. What was important about the Reverend? The Doctor finally looks over at him and notes how he asks so many questions, John Smith. "I'm your Companion!" Companion to an ersatz brummagem Doctor in the Home Counties, a human Doctor, a good strong man not yet beaten down. A man with his memory taken? Just a man, to take the reins for awhile.

"The Reverend was the pillar of the community, a member of many parish boards. A keen advocate of children's charity." But why would the Cybermen want him dead? And what's the connection to the first death? (None of these questions means anything, and their answers even less; as a mystery, it's not even trying. I think this, combined with the wack wackiness of the Cybershade chase, is the reason I'm so lukewarm on this episode. I never like the Christmas Specials, but this one... Well, better than the [Kylie](#) one, at least. But as a bridge to the 2009 Specials it works. It certainly underlines where our boy's at, post-Donna, and how scary and sad it's still possible to get, which is all the mandate required. Still, ugh.)

"It's funny," the Doctor says. "I seem to be telling you everything." John Smith nods. That's how it works. For the Doctor; for the Companion too: "As though you engendered some sort of... Trust. You seem familiar, Mr. Smith. I ... Know your face." MAKE OUT MUSIC starts, but you can see for a second how this episode works, or is supposed to work: as the prelude for a story about Companions and companionship, about the worst goodbye -- worse than Adric, worse than anything -- leading to a splitting off of hearts and a loss of memory and retreat into that worst of all buffalo, the Doctor who Masters, it's a beautiful reversal to play this episode straight: John Smith, deliberately and once again laying down his title, his name, in order to remember her. To put his hand on the wall once again and feel her on the other side. I'm your Companion, of course I ask questions. I'm your Doctor, of course you trust me with your whole heart.

"I can't help noticing you're wearing a fobwatch..." John says, and the Doctor nods. "Legend has it that the memories of a Timelord can be contained within a watch..." He flips it open, John Smith does, and the works go flying: gears and springs and cogs. No bigger on the inside than it was outside, just like the Doctor. "Maybe not," says Smith, embarrassed, and bids his Doctor continue. "Look for anything different, possibly metal. Anything that doesn't seem to belong, perhaps a mechanical device that could fit no earthly engine." To protect his Doctor, Smith keeps his screwdriver quiet, as he roams and sonics things. "It could even seem to be organic, but unlike any organism of the natural world..." The Doctor hears the buzzing whine of the sonic screwdriver, and John quickly puts it in his pocket. "Just me... Whistling?" As though by coincidence, or in the guise of another excellent question, John wonders offhand what might be in this *particular* chest.

"Different, and metal," John says, holding up a metal shell, about a handspan wide. "They are infostamps," he tells his Doctor, "I mean, at a guess. If I were *you*," John says, "I'd say they worked something like this..." He taps the infostamp and pictures appear on the wall: "Compressed information, tons of it. That's... History of London, 1066 to the present day." John doesn't notice his Doctor, behind him, looking down at nothing, lost to the world as another piece of pain falls into place. He's only human.

"This is like a disk, a cyberdisk, but why would the Cybermen need something so simple? They've got to be wireless! Unless... They're in the wrong century, they haven't got much power, they need plain old basic infostamps to update themselves..." John finally notices the Doctor, his Doctor, staring into space, losing track. He puts on his glasses; Smith doctors the Doctor. "What is it?"

"I've seen one of these before," the Doctor says in a harsh, sad voice; the Doctor fights past one lost memory after another: Cybermen attacking, he was holding the device, the infostamp, when they... "The night I lost my mind. The night I regenerated." His face, changing before your eyes. "The Cybermen, they

made me change. My mind, my face, my whole self." He puts his hand on John Smith's face, remembering him briefly. Feeling closer to him, for a moment, than a brother. Doctor-Doctor, inside. "And you were there. Who are you?" John Smith looks back at him, realizing he's been playing them both false this whole time. Where there were two Doctors, they thought, there were really none.

The Doctor looks at this man, this nameless man who lives in an improvised, jury-rigged approximation of his broken life, who does with it more good and more joyfully than he can remember feeling capable of. Rose, the Master, Donna. His daughters. Martha. "A friend," he says lovingly, giving the man all the strength he can master. "I swear." The man, the Next Doctor, begins to weep. "Then I beg you, John. Help me." Two words the Doctor never refuses. He watches his Companion, this strange man, go down again, into the shadows, and he loves him.

"But it's not a conversation for a dead man's house. It'll make more sense if we go back to the TARDIS... Um, *your* TARDIS." The man doesn't respond. It's too close, the pain is everywhere, implicit in the dead man's house, in the house of the man who died. Or was born. The Doctor rushes around his friend, sonicking everything: "If this room's got infostamps, then maybe, just maybe, it's got something that needs infostamping..." he opens a door, and sees a Cyberman staring down. And so begins the chase, which has the benefit of getting the stranger moving again. The Doctor shoves him up the stairs and grabs first an umbrella -- he flaps it open and closed again, which does nothing, all the umbrellas in London couldn't stop this thing -- and then a cutlass, which is suitably ridiculous, and the entire time he's trying desperately to help them.

"Listen, whatever you're doing stuck in 1851, I can help! I'm the only person in the world who can help you! Listen to me! I'm the Doctor. You need me. Check your memory banks, my name's The Doctor. Leave this man alone, the Doctor is me! The Doctor, remember? I'm The Doctor! You need me alive! You need The Doctor, and that's me!" The other man runs, up the stairs, and comes to rest as the Cybermen continue to advance, chasing after them both, screaming *Delete! Delete!*

He remembers holding the infostamp, holding the infostamp. He remembers it flashing, as it flashes, and then he zaps the Cybermen with it, until their heads explode. Information overload, literally; the Doctor salivates on him: "Infostamp with a cyclo-Steinham core. You ripped open the core and broke the safety! Only the Doctor would think of that!" The last next doctor nods. "I did that last time," he says, remembering their attack in a dead man's house. The Doctor produces a stethoscope out of nowhere, promising he'll be okay, checking both sides of his chest of course. "You told them you were The Doctor. Why did you do that?" And the Doctor's answer is true, and false, and more of both than anything he'll ever say: "Oh, I was just protecting you."

The man's face twists, because he can sense the darkness behind it; the Doctor

knows something about the Doctor, something ugly and lonely, a death and memories lost, and the blood of children, and the silence of women, and the engine that takes us where we need to go. "You're trying to take away the only thing I've got, like they did." Like they did, like they always have, like they will continue to do. "They stole something, something so precious! But I can't remember. What happened to me? What did they do?"

The whole point of coming back here, after all the past iffiness with Victoria, was for this moment. The moment John Smith could look this strange, nameless, history-less man in the eyes and see all that strength, all that power and wisdom, the way he laughs at death, and then see the weakness and the fear and the deep unknowable sadness too. So that he could look at this man, be his Companion and realize that no matter what, he has to protect him, save him, help him solve the mystery of himself. The Doctor nearly cradles him now; he's lost so much. "We'll find out. You and me, together." This is what she felt. This is what they all felt. Now he knows. It only makes his heart ache more.

The Reverend Aubrey goes into the ground: the wreaths and flowers and casket are all black against the snow. It's totally awesome. And as the preacher begins to pray, it gets awesomer: Miss Hartigan, lately of the Cyber Factory, strides toward the funeral in a red dress, holding a red parasol. And under it she will protect everything these men forgot to care for, when they were oiling the engine. "...Change our vile body that it may be like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working..." the preacher says (pithy, but admirably and lovingly sacrilegious, *glorious* in the way RTD does *best*), stumbling on his words as she approaches, and when he protests, she wonders whatever for.

"A lady at the graveside is debatable enough, but... Your apparel...." She wonders, then, to the company of esteemed men, if it's simply too exciting. Old Mr. Cole calls her a disgrace and a harlot. "And you should know, Mr. Cole." He is astounded, asking how she knows her name. "You've walked past me so many times, all you good men of charity, never once asking my name," she laughs at them, in their hypocrisy, and an older one remembers her name. "It's Miss Hartigan, isn't it?" She grins. "I saw you looking, you cheeky boy!" She's grotesque, over the line, pushing the envelope for the sake of neither the envelope nor the act of pushing; playing the harlot because it's the only role they left her. And confronted with their works, the company of esteemed men begins to panic.

(As my father, who would love Miss Hartigan, is fond of saying in these circumstances: "Oh, fuck me? Fuck *you!*" Cheeky boy.)

Who she is, by day, is the matron of the St Joseph Workhouse. "Your... Humble servant," she says, more ironically than lasciviously and more truthfully than ironically. At least before today. What she means is, she is their contemporary. They are slavers, in company. She circles them, spiraling as they recoil toward the grave. "Oh, I've watched you all. Visiting, smiling. Bestowing your

beneficence upon the poor while I scrubbed down their filthy beds." As she, long ago, was the lucky beneficiary in her turn, and some other woman, now dead, scrubbed down her filthy bed. And in the night, if she could sleep at all, she'd write letters to herself, in her incredible imagination.

Dear Mercy, (They'd say.) The world is wrong...

Mercy summons the Cybermen, the Shades, and they make short work of all but four of these kind gentlemen. For it was Mercy sent the Cybermen to the late Reverend Fairchild, the better to gather them all together. "Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live," she quotes at them, and scoffs at time, and gathers the ones she wants: "Mr. Cole, Mr. Scoones, Mr. Fetch, Mr. Milligan." The others shove, and run, and push each other into death, all the disposables, including the priest. "Sorry," she says, but she doesn't mean it; him least of all, him and his God that never quite seemed to care enough to save her, because she was disposable. Insignificant, you might say. Signifying nothing.

It's left between the lines because the Christmas Specials, even more than the show, are for kids. But here's what she signifies, in plain language: At the bottom of the Thames, full fathoms down, is all the shit and refuse and shame and dirt and pain and hate and fear that keeps the rest of us alive, and celebrating Christmas. At the bottom of the Thames is where we keep the spider, the shame: the engines that run on the blood of children, and the silence of women. At the bottom is where she lived, for so long. Too pretty for a mudlark, too smart for a wife. There's something on her back. It is you. And it is Mr. Cole, and Mr. Scoones, and Mr. Fetch, and it's Mr. Milligan. And when she rises, she brings not only them but all the shit and refuse and shame and dirt and pain and hate and fear that makes Christmas possible, from the bottom of the Thames right up into the sky. She will fly. She dreams of leaving, but never does. The world is wrong.

When they return, Rosita throws herself on him joyfully, and the man chuckles oddly: "Now then, Rosita. A little decorum." He's still in the grip of it, he still thinks he's a God. He doesn't know yet what he's allowed to have. "He's always doing this, leaving me behind!" she shouts at the Doctor, looking for sympathy. The thing these words do to him is less about sympathy, or more than.

By the hand we're lead toward the Next TARDIS, which the Doctor can't wait to see. Through the house, into the home and the garage. "You were right though, Rosita. The Reverend Fairchild's death was the work of the Cybermen!" Of course she was. All through the house there's luggage, baggage the Next Doctor carries with him if you will: "Evidence. Property of Jackson Lake, the first man to be murdered." The Doctor nods, understanding part of it at last. His new friend changes the subject excitedly, moving smoothly away from the terrifying feeling that man's name produces: Jackson Lake, the first victim. "Oh, but my new friend is a fighter, Rosita! Much like myself! He faced the Cybermen with a

cutlass! I'm not ashamed to say, he was braver than I! He was quite brilliant!"

The Doctor and Rosita, Companions to the man, share a conspiratorial look as he sonics Jackson Lake's luggage open -- "Are you whistling again?" -- because they know, both of them, what it is to love him, and the burden only Companions know. All the little things. "That's another man's property," Rosita calls out while the Doctor takes down a particularly important valise. The man sits nearby, once again jolted out of time and space by a horror and a sadness, staring into nothingness. The Doctor asks how they met; how she came to be his Companion.

"He saved my life. Late one night, by the Osterman's Wharf, this... Creature came out of the shadows. A man made of metal. I thought I was gonna die. And then, there he was. The Doctor." The Doctor looks from Rosita to his friend, smiling at them both. This little world, made of pieces. "Can you help him, sir? He has such terrible dreams. Wakes at night in such a state of terror..." He stands again, having come back to them. No more dipping in time for now. "Come now, Rosita," he says, softly approaching. "With all the things a Timelord has seen, everything he's lost, he must surely have bad dreams."

To be understood, to be loved like that: It's not just about making the Doctor a Companion and a strange man the Next Doctor, it's not just about feeling what they felt. This is a man who has walked the halls of the Doctor, thinking them his own, and travelled through the doors, open and shut. He looks at Jackson like he looked at [Donna](#), or the Master, but the deeper truth is that this sadness is real, either way. Jackson Lake has a biography, but that doesn't mean this pain isn't for the Doctor as well. Rosita worries, and the Doctor worries with her. "Oh, now, look. Jackson Lake had an infostamp... Doctor," John Smith says, "The answer to all this is in your TARDIS. Can I see it?"

The pride on Lake's face, showing John Smith his [TARDIS](#), is magnificent as the music that attends it. "There she is! My transport through time and space... Tethered Aerial Release, Developed In Style!" The Doctor finds all this adorable, but she's just a big blue balloon. If you were attempting to think of a form, a skeleton on which to spread the world and make sense of Impossible Things, I can think of no more fitting shadow of her than a hot-air balloon. That sense of adventure, that breathlessness. That heavy loft, above and below you, that makes you feel so much safer than you should. The way the basket swings back and forth so slowly, like you're being rocked to sleep: developed in style, indeed. We take the skies for granted, but listen to them. Young Jed, an employee of the nearby gasworks who keeps her gassed up and in repair, is another sort of Companion: "Maybe tonight's the night, Doctor. Imagine it, seeing Christmas from above!"

"...Well, not just yet, I think," says the friend. "One day, I will ascend. One day soon..." The Doctor asks but you can see in his eyes that he already knows the answer: "You've never actually been up?" Jackson's a bit embarrassed, behind

the bluster and the excuses, and Rosita speaks for him. Companions carry the burdens. "He dreams of leaving, but never does." Lake nods, sharply: "I can depart in the TARDIS, once London is safe. And finally, when I'm up there... Think of it, John! The time, and the space..." The Doctor's sad. He dreams of leaving, but never does.

"The perfect escape." But where's he wandering, what's he leaving, what's he running from? What's there to escape? Even this new Doctor wonders. The Doctor hates this part. "...Then do you want me to tell you? Because I think I've worked it out now. How you became the Doctor. What do you think? Do you want to know?" He doesn't. Not really.

Mercy stands with Mr. Cole, Mr. Scoones, Mr. Fetch and Mr. Milligan, shiny new Cybus Bluetooths in their eyes, in a line. The Court of the CyberKing is waiting, of course, but first she tests her control of them, turning them left and right with a word before sending them out to get the labor: those children that belonged to them when they were alive. When they were merely monsters who were men and not monsters in men's shapes. They head off in four directions and Mercy knocks the roof of her carriage with her red umbrella; a Cybershade drives her away.

The story begins, the Doctor begins, *With the Cybermen*... A long time away, and not so far from here, the Cybermen were fought **and they were beaten**. And they were sent into a howling wilderness called the Void, locked inside forevermore. But then **a greater battle** rose up, so great that everything inside the Void perished. But, as the walls of the world weakened, the last of the Cybermen must have fallen through the dimensions, back in time, to land here. And they found you... At the same time, another man came to London: Mr. Jackson Lake. Plenty of luggage, money in his pocket. Maybe coming to town for the winter season, I don't know. But he found the Cybermen too. "And just like you," says the Doctor to the Doctor, "Exactly like you -- he took hold of an infostamp..."

JL. Jackson Lake. The secret was in the watch, but not like they thought. Because think about this, first of all that Doctor-**Donna** was right -- you fix a Chameleon Circuit by linking fragments, by superseding the binary -- but second of all it's the strangest coincidence of memories and sad stories happening here. Tim Latimer and John Smith, long ago in an English winter, both took part in Jackson's general story here, in opposite and troubling ways: it was Tim who carried the watch, and Smith who was had to leave, in the end. He thought he was a lie, just like Jackson Lake now does. And then you have the more obvious parallels with Donna, in which he has false memories to match her missing ones, and they meet in the middle, at their own potential, their strength and wisdom. In the way they dream of leaving, but never do.

"You became **the Doctor** because the infostamp you picked up was a book about one particular man." The Doctor projects the Doctors, one by one, all nine, on

the wall of their home. Their beautiful memories, their faces. "The Cybermen's database, stolen from the Daleks inside The Void... everything you could want to know about the Doctor." It stops on Ten's face and Jackson jerks upright, recognizing the face of his friend. "The infostamp must have backfired, streamed all that information about me right inside your [head](#)."

Jackson Lake begins to weep: in the middle of a nightmare, something stolen and something lost, in all that fire and electricity, the information, the regeneration of himself to himself, becoming something else. A man who could cope, who laughed at danger. Who loved it more and more, the worse it got, and would never let loss keep him from saving the world. There are a million ways to regenerate. It's not always so flashy. "I am nothing but a lie," he says, crumbling, and the Doctor shouts, grabbing at his hands. "No no no no no! Infostamps are just facts and figures!" He shivers, terrified, as the Doctor points wildly: "All that bravery! Saving Rosita!" Defending London Town. "And the invention, building a TARDIS... That's all you."

His chin comes up, that lovely chin, and he blinks it away; his alchemy turns fear to angry and thence to purpose, and so it is that Jackson shivers now with purpose. "And what else? Tell me what else, there's still something missing, isn't there? I demand you tell me, sir. Tell me what they took." But they both already know, and even as the Doctor apologizes, Lake starts going catatonic. "Infostamp's plain technology. It's not enough to make a man lose his mind. What you suffered is called a fugue. A fugue state. Where the mind just runs away, because it can't bear to look back."

Jackson hears him, in there, and fights his way to the surface, closes his eyes, trying to listen. To hold onto it. "You wanted to become someone else, because Jackson Lake had lost so much..." The bells ring, in the cloisters, and Rosita calls it midnight. Christmas Day. It brings Jackson Lake back to himself. It is a birth, and it is a tragedy, and that's what regeneration means. That is what change is.

"Oh my God," say he, and remembers his wife. She was murdered, that night he lost his mind. Lost time. "Caroline," he mumbles, as the Doctor watches, and he looks up into those eyes. "They killed my wife." Rosita cares for him while the Doctor looks on, while he loses it, but soon enough the infostamp starts beeping, and then there's another, like easter eggs hidden around the place. The Doctor pulls out a bandolier of them, a whole cache, and moans in awe. But why are they beeping? "Activation. A call to arms... The Cybermen are moving!" The Doctor runs into the street, and sees something in shadows against the wall: by firelight, after Christmas has been packed away for the night, a line of people being marched somewhere, against their wills.

"The Doctor needs help," Jackson Lake says, and we'll hear it a dozen more times before the Doctor does: "I learnt that much about him, there should be someone at his side." She gives in, but he's talking about her: she's the

Companion. She's more capable and readier for battle, and so she goes. Without a second thought, without a word.

It's children, being marched. When Rosita arrives asking what's up, the Doctor doesn't blink. "That's Mr. Cole, he's master of the Hazel Street Workhouse. Maybe he's taking them to prayers?" Nothing so holy. The Doctor speaks directly to the old man, irritating, but to no avail. "Mr. Cole, you seem to have something in your ear," he says, reaching for his screwdriver, but soon enough sees the Cybershade guarding against just this kind of tomfoolery. All five of the Creepy Old White Guys Of The Apocalypse lead their herds of children toward the Cyber Court, and ordering them to march. And the children do, crying and afraid -- but no more so than with regard to any other incomprehensible demand these men have made on them, okay, in their short lives, so probably less afraid than your very fortunate children would be in this circumstance -- with Cybershades nipping at their heels, in the middle of the night, in the snow.

JL weeps in his fake house, in his fake life, and I guess this is how long it takes to pull it together, because he eventually remembers something and goes tearing through the house for something and it's all very exciting and meaningful for some reason, and just the fact of him going "Where is it? *Where is it?*" means we've reached the part of most episodes, but especially Christmas episodes, where I remember how much I dislike this show. Which I thought we already did with the rope thing, but no. So there's much Doctor/Rosita talk about getting into the factory, gotta get into this sluice or whatever, but they get interrupted by two Cybermen -- "That's cheating, sneaking up! Did you have your legs on silent?" the Doctor adorably shrieks -- followed by Mercy, who appears just in the nick as usual.

The Doctor tries to tell her to be chill and not touch the Cybermen, and she laughs at him because she is the boss of them she thinks, and there are puns ("My knights in shining armor, *quite literally*," she has the audacity to say) and whatever, she's got free will, and she's like, "DUDE. I'm not a ROBOT. I keep telling you!" Actually, what she says is sort of cool, to the effect that nobody ever changed her mind about anything, and she's not about to start with stupid-looking robots.

But the episode as aired, and God knows how much even less sense the US version made, has already made such a hash of this lady that it doesn't really matter anymore that all her lines are just that, one-liner smart-assiness that isn't even all that fresh and manages to make the exact opposite point it's trying to make: "The Cybermen offered me the one thing I wanted: liberation!" Which ends up being like, feminists are not only incomplete men, but also fucking crazy bitches, which is not the intention, but then, purposely leaving out *all possible motivation* for a character's actions tends to have that effect.

So whatever, the Doctor notifies the Cybermen that he's the real Doctor,

proving it with an infostamp, and asks what the kids are all about. "What are children ever needed for? They're a workforce," Mercy explains. "Very soon now, the whole Empire will see. And they will bow down, in worship... The perfect day for a birth, with a new message for the people." What that message actually will be we don't know and never will, because she starts tripping balls well before that time, but I mean, at that point you'd be stupid to care what her plan is, because giant robots are awesomer than any amount of well-written TV.

The Cybermen beat on their tin chests and step forward to kill the doctor and Rosita, but then Jackson Lake shows up, having strapped the bandolier of infostamps across his chest and zapping Cybermen willy-nilly. Maybe it's his new coping mechanism; it certainly looks therapeutic. Mercy screams for backup -- "Shades! Shades!" -- and Rosita makes the time to punch her in the face for some cathartic reason, so then she rolls around with the Cybermen awkwardly and the Doctor and Rosita are smug, and when Mercy stands up there's blood on her face and she is not interested in waiting until dawn anymore.

Jackson and his wife were moving to London so he could take up a post at the university. A teacher, like John Smith. And their house, the one he discovered the Cybermen at? Number 15, *Latimer* Street. I love this show. So if they got out that way, probably there's a way into the factory from there. So of course the Doctor tells Rosita to go back and be safe, and of course she tells him to suck it, and of course he sighs, but somewhere in there it's the most comforting thing he's heard all day.

"You have wisdom," says Cyber Leader. "If the Doctor is planning to intervene, then the Ascension will commence immediately." Mr. Cole, Mr. Scoones, Mr. Fetch and Mr. Milligan are summarily electrocuted at the pull of Mercy's lever, and she smiles at their fall. It's nice, for a moment, but then she goes into the other room and starts shouting at the kids about the Industrial Revolution like a steampunk Ru Paul all, "I wanna see you work!" so they turn wheels, and carry water, and there are pieces of coal that are as big as their heads, and like, steampunk is kind of a bummer right now. Little kids, working their fingers to the bloody bone. That's kind of amazing on Christmas.

"Soon the CyberKing will awake," Cyber Leader reiterates for no reason, and Mercy takes his arm, asking to be shown his throne. Watching a hot lady take a Cyberman's arm, like he's her escort in to dinner, is pretty awesome too. Less so is how the Cybermen keep automatically detecting Jackson and the Doctor and Rosita no matter what they do. Something happens with some stupid Dalek thing, I don't even care anymore, it's some kind of Dalek machine of some sort, because *what on God's earth* can't be *vastly fucking improved* by throwing a billion Daleks at it. So the Doctor breaks part of it off or something, and just says Dalek Dalek Dalek like a million times and runs around with his hair going

crazy, and there's much talk of electricity and percentages of this and that, and what happens when the... Mathmath Dalekdalek Cyberthing. Come! On! Little kids doing forced labor, steam and clockwork machines, insane hooker headmistresses? Don't lose me now!

So the Cyber Leader conducts Mercy to an ever-so-steampunky drawbridge, and it's magnificent, and on the other side is an even more magnificent thing that Mercy likes to a throne even though it's obviously a total electric chair because Mercy doesn't get it, still, that the Cybermen don't really have aristocracy or kings, just an electric chair to *kill* you with or a Dalek device to *bore* you with, and anyway, there's no such thing as royalty in a race of robots that run on pure Cold War Communism. Mercy congratulates Cyber Leader on being the cyberfuture CyberKing and he's like, "OMG this is so embarrassing because now we're going to take out your brain and stick monster in your ears and turn you into the pilot of a giant fucking robot," and she's like, "I'm fairly certain I *asked* you about that, and you said no," and he's like, "Yeeeeaaaah. We lied?"

"What do the Cybermen want?" Rosita asks, and even though Freud hasn't even been invented yet the answer's the same: the Cybermen want to take your brain out and put it in a metal shell and for everything to be just like them. For example, cut to Mercy Hartigan, who is now strapped into the chair and arguing semantics -- *You can't do this to me!* and the guy's like, "Incorrect! For we did it already!" and this kind of thing -- and panicking, because she wants to be the boss of robots and not a robot. Or I mean, at least a friend of robots. She complains that she would have served them anyway, and not only is that clearly untrue because she's awesome, but also because she's not: "Your mind is riddled with anger and abuse and revenge. These have no place in a Cybermind. Activate!" The crown comes down, and the many hurts and lost memories of Mercy Hartigan, the anger and abuse and the revenge, are taken care of. "Emotions have tormented you all of your life. Now you will be set free. This is your liberation." All hail the CyberKing, awakening to a new dawn, her eyes open and black as night.

Looking down into the factory. The kids working, cybermen patrolling. JL: Upon my soul... R: What is it? It's an engine. It's huge, gears and steam everywhere They're generating electricity. But what for? JL: We can set them free! Calming him: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no...

While the Doctor and Companions stare down at the factory and get all heroic and excited, Mercy realizes that being the CyberKing is not all bad. The black eyes are on like every show, eventually. Sometimes they mean **demon possession**, sometimes they mean you are about to go turboslut **at the behest of Dionysus**, occasionally they mean **you tried to film a threesome and ended up watching some guy accidentally OD on coke which so traumatized you that you had to run through the city with no pants on and have sex with a heavily waxed human Ken doll and then fuck off to boarding school for a year, causing**

everybody you left behind to break down and become suicidal and bulimic and queer. But here, I guess they mean your brain is becoming tapioca, like *evil* pudding, because for such an awesome character, Mercy Hartigan just turned into a real shitty character, with a retardedness quotient equaling or exceeding that of the cat-penis octopus-headed Dalek Guido Thing.

Essentially for the exact same reasons, actually. So the Doctor puts his glasses on and something something science. There's an engine, and if they stop it, the Cybermen will come, but if they don't, then the bad thing will happen, which I guess is *not* Mercy going all black-eyed demon on us, but then it doesn't matter, because there's a "power fluctuation," which is... Mercy Hartigan doing her best Bad Wolf impression. "I can see the stars! The worlds beyond! The Vortex of Time itself and the whole of infinity... Oh, but this is glorious!"

Cyber Leader explains she's wrong, because "glorious" is only something you'd say if you had emotions, and she's like, "Totally! I am having all kind of emotions right now! *There is so much joy in this machine!*" Which, okay, that made me happy. Happier even than the fact that her body -- which she seems to agree on some level is "vile" -- has been changed, that it may be like until this glorious body. According to a mighty working. But whatever, Cyber Leader isn't having it. "Joy is not acceptable!" So she's still strapped down, and the brain-tapioca sort of takes over, so it's like, "Don't you see? My mind is stronger than you ever thought! It dominates, sir! It dominates you!" And they freak out. "I am new. The might of your technology combined with my own imagination... Yes!" The voice changes from the clanky vibrato before to mostly the voice she had before this whole folly was mounted: "There will be a new race of Cybermen. My Cybermen! Logic and strength combined with fury and passion!"

(Oh my *GOD*, this is exactly like the cat-penis octopus-headed creature. I swear on that guy from Alphabeat if she or the new race of Cyberwankers suddenly has a change of heart due to the power of the human spirit I am going to spit on the floor. I will do it, sir.) So they shoot science vibes at each other and you think she's a goner, but apparently a standard feature of her amazing mind is that it's also good at shooting lasers at robots. From her forehead.

The Cybermen go down in sparks, and there are sparks shooting out of the thing the Doctors have been babbling about, and the percentage of the whatever is shooting up, up, and the assumption is that when it is at 100 whatever percents, all the children will die. So then there's running. Meanwhile, the CyberKing has eliminated all threats to her regency and now has all the remaining Cybermen under her control, because she can do anything in the whole world, I guess. Except *chill out*.

More running. Doctors and Rosita get all the kids out of there and it takes a million steampunky years, while Cybermen rush around with those doggies some more, being commanded by her imperious steering wheel-headed self.

Then comes a thing I don't even want to talk about, so I'll just say: let's take ten minutes out of this impending whatever-it-is that we still don't-know-what-it-is so that Jackson Lake can suddenly unfugue about the fact that he has a son that was kidnapped at the beginning of the story -- and of course like in all science fiction this is of vastly greater importance than the guy's wife having just died -- and guess who's standing on that ledge like Toby the Future Goblin King? Right, the kid. What kid? The kid with the power. What power? The power to suddenly be very fucking important in the middle of this story, destroying all forward momentum and making Jackson Lake look like even more of a weenus.

So yeah, stop the whole fucking story so we can have a big fake emotional moment where the Doctor *literally swings on ropes* for awhile to get to the kid, while things explode forever and everywhere and Daddy blubbers down in the exploding place, and saves the kid, and OMG daddy loves you and all this, and seriously, it goes on forever. And Jackson Lake -- whom we've known now for about five minutes -- sweeps up his son -- whom we've known since this paragraph -- into his arms and cries and cries and cries and cries. None of which fucking matters, because who are these people, and why was the idiot kid standing on that ledge while the place was literally coming down around his ears in the following ways: It was on fire. It was electrocuting itself. It was sort of raining in there, or boiling steam clouds were in there. Giant boulders. Things exploding and competent adults literally conducting the [children](#) to the doors one by one, but not old Frederic Lake, no. Not our Freddy. He's going to stand right there in the most fucking precarious place possible until several grown men are forced to go up there after him, and why? No reason other than the heart-tugging reunion between two people *we have never met and cannot care about*. And then outside the building there is yet more administrivia as Rosita explains to approximately thirty kids, separately, that they should run to the left and stay away from burning or exploding things.

Finally, finally, the giant robot. It comes out of the Thames, and it is *fabulous*. Big as the sky. Built less like a Cyberman and more like a Wicker one. There's lots of running around, and Mercy's chock full of tapioca chatter -- "Behold! I am risen! Witness me, mankind, as CyberKing of all!" -- which doesn't even mean what she thinks it does, turns out, because really a CyberKing isn't a person or a job: it's a thing. "A ship! Dreadnought class! Front line of an invasion. And inside the chest, a Cyberfactory, ready to convert millions!" (Girl who was a ship, check.) And Mercy's booming, "And I will walk! I will stride across this tiny little world!" And so she does, and it is awesome like whoa. Houses smashing, clouds rising, people screaming, giant robot feet. The denizens of the new world do not accept it well. "My people, why do they not rejoice?" she shouts, smashing everything as it walks across London Town. I think I know.

Jackson tries to accompany the Doctor for whatever he's going to do now, and

the Doctor tells him to stay put. "You've got your son. You've got a reason to live." Jackson asks the salient question -- and the Doctor doesn't? -- but this sends the Doctor into a little fugue of his own, and they're both really sad for a second. *Got it*, Jackson nods, and he says goodbye. "God save you, Doctor," he says, and takes his son to safety.

The Doctor -- still carrying the Dalek thingy he broke off the other Dalek thingy -- runs up to Jeb, who's just been standing around I guess, and they get the **TARDIS** into the air. It's very exciting. And still, the Voice of Tapioca. "People of the world! Now hear me, your governments will surrender. And if not, then behold my power!" The CyberKing, not content with being huge and awesome, converts her fist into a huge gun, blowing the shit out of an alley, and then more and more exploding things. It is remarkable. What is she even doing?

The Doctor loads the infostamps into the balloon, is informed by Jed that he is "flamin' bonkers," and they finally get the balloon in the air. Meanwhile, Jackson introduces his son to Rosita, and she just sort of stares at them while the robot blows everything up and continues to wander around. Jed laughs in sheer delight as the Doctor lofts up toward the robot, and down below Jackson crows for it. Some dude's like, "The heck is that dude?" And Jackson goes, "His name, sir, is the Doctor!"

The Cybermen notice somebody getting close, and Mercy's like, "What? Check it out! So they Voltron the head around to look at him, and his hair going absolutely crazy in the wind. He aims the infostamps at her, and she's like, "Another man, come to assert himself against me in the night!" Which would be so, so compelling if any of this made sense. So the Doctor levels with her -- "You might have the most remarkable mind this world has ever seen, strong enough to control the Cybermen themselves" -- and she tells him to shove it, because she doesn't need his permission to be awesome, but he tells her she kind of does, because she's stomping on London and is going to die if she doesn't calm down. He offers to use the Dalek thingy from the other Dalek thingy to send her somewhere else where there aren't any people to Cyberconvert.

"I have the world below," Mercy points out. "And it is abundant with so many minds, ready to become extensions of me. Why would I leave this place?" Because he's going to stop her. "What do you make of me, sir? An idiot?" No, but that's not the question, the question is whether she's going to make him into the kind of a guy who blows up awesome robot-controlling ladies. She is firmly in the affirmative on that one, and he's sad. "You make me into this," he says, and fires vibes into the robot's mouth where she's hanging out. And nothing happens, so she laughs at him, but it's too hard to even care because A) this shit fell apart a good while ago and B) his hair is now Edward Cullen amounts of crazy, and it's really distracting.

"I wasn't trying to kill you. All I did was break the Cyber-connection, leaving

your mind open." She begins to wig out, because of that goddamn human spirit thing no doubt. "Open, I think, for the first time in far too many years. So you can see. Just look at yourself. Look at what you've done." She starts hyperventilating like a hooker that didn't know her place and ended up turning into a giant robot. He apologizes, and she realizes what a dick she's been acting like, and then screams so loud that her Cybermen explode, and then she explodes, and then it's just a giant robot with nobody driving it, and it's about to fall on London and kill everybody, but then the Dalek thingy does something or another, and the robot disappears. The Doctor is sad, because that was dumb.

And the sad thing is, RTD and Gardner realizes later on that obviously Miss Hartigan -- in addition to making any sense whatsoever -- should have been the one to disappear the CyberKing somehow, herself, without any reference to the stupid Dalek thingies at all. That would have been great. Instead, we just have the Doctor giving this "I'm killing you for your own good" speech he's already given a million times, and a bad guy who was neither bad nor a guy, but somehow and for some dumb reason became both.

"I'd say he used that Dimension Vault to transfer the wreckage of the CyberKing into the Time Vortex, there to be harmlessly disintegrated," says Jackson Lake, the Victorian Age's answer to a question nobody asked. Then he jumps up on a lamppost and decides to make everything even stupider. "Ladies and gentlemen, I know that man! That Doctor on high. And I know that he has done this deed a thousand times! But not once, no sir, not once, not ever, has he ever been thanked! But no more! For I say to you, on this Christmas morn, Bravo, sir! Bravo!" They all cheer, and it's so fucking dumb I can't believe it. "Bravo! Bravo, sir! Bravo, Doctor."

The Doctor is stoic in his own little dreamworld of sadness and the humanity or whatever, and then finally hears them applauding, which makes him smile at wave at them, and it starts to snow. Needless to say, Jackson Lake is down there crying like a baby. And for my part, I have just fulfilled my promise to spit right on the floor.

Later, London is a mess due to being stomped on by a giant robot, but they're cleaning it up. Jackson calls himself "a widower, but with my son and with a good friend." Rosita... Oh, she doesn't matter anymore, I guess. "Frederic will need a nursemaid and I can think of none better!" Even the Doctor looks at him like, "I'm so sure." Jackson invites him to dinner with the family, at the Traveller's Halt. "A Christmas feast, in celebration." Jackson looks down, away, but stays present: "And in memory of those we have lost." The Doctor just looks at him, sad, because of all people Jackson Lake must know that he won't stay. "You know me," he says, and Jackson follows him saying, "I don't think anyone does." Not anymore.

"Tell me one thing. All those facts and figures I saw of the Doctor's life, you were never alone." The light goes out of [the Doctor's](#) eyes. Completely. "All those bright and shining Companions! But not anymore?" It's too sad to answer properly, but Jackson pushes, so he answers honestly. "They leave. Because they should, or they find someone else. And some of them... Forget me. I suppose in the end they break my heart."

Jeez. See, if it had just been that somehow, just sad and dark with all that mirroring of Doctor and Companion and Smith and Lake and Rose-Martha-Donna-Rosita, the memories lost and found, Doctor loving Jackson Lake the way we love the Doctor, I would have loved it. Or if it had been Mercy Hartigan attempting to create *praxis* and the Doctor being forced to fight her even though she is totally right. Or if it had been about Ten's jealousy about Rose's Bad Wolf Bay life with Ten-Five. Or if it had just been about a bloody giant robot, that would have been fine. But instead it's all of this at once, all of it half-assed, and there's nothing more embarrassing than a half-assed episode of *Doctor Who*, because if you shoot for the moon even something dumb can be transcendent. *Planet Of The Ood*, for example: that was television with the whole ass. I'm not asking for *Human Nature* every time out the box, although I don't really see a reason we couldn't have that. But this was more like steampunky *Torchwood*, in terms of the unnecessary plotheoles and general fakeness of emotion hiding the actual structure and meaning of the story under a full fathom of Thames-floating crap.

Anyway, bumner. I like the next one a lot better, and not just because of the heavy hints as to what happens next, or the kind of world into which Matt Smith/Twelve will be born. God, every word in that one is heavy with import, and not the obvious ones either. That's going to be fun to talk about. But ugh. Christmas every time. So Jackson Lake gets a little Donna on the Doctor -- "That offer of Christmas dinner? It's no longer a request, it's a demand. In memory of those we have lost" -- which manages to change the Doctor's mind, which even he finds amazing, and as he accepts and they [head](#) off together, he says sincerely, "If anyone had to be the Doctor, I'm glad it was you." I'm happy to say I agree.

Meet you in a month ... On THE PLANET OF THE DEAD!

CHARMLESS IN ABADDON

By **Jacob Clifton** | Season 4 | Episode 15 | Aired on 07.26.2009

Planet Of The Dead - Still mourning for Donna, the Doctor wisely decides not to spend much time hanging out with the most irritating woman in the world, despite their being a perfect match.

Recaplet: The Doctor is abducted to a desert planet, along with a busful of stereotypes and a tragically horrible young aristocrat named Christina. While it's natural to despise her, we would be remiss if we didn't also note that she makes a great Companion to His Yippiness -- but the Doctor will have none of that, continuing the post-Donna theme of darkness and loneliness and general whiny wound-licking.

Turns out it's not so much dust all over the place as it is the digested remains of an entire planet, thanks to wormhole-travelling nightmare manta ray-looking metallic creatures. They showed up, ate the planet and all its inhabitants, and are now spinning a wormhole that will take them to Earth.

Christina and the Doctor team up with some giant-housefly aliens to disarm the creatures, while back on Earth UNIT begins taking Harriet-type steps to eradicate the threat altogether. Man, Martha turns her head for five seconds and the whole place goes predictably apeshit. Luckily, UNIT don't have to block the doorway, as Christina's cat-burglar skills and general Mary Sueness help the Doctor pull out a last-minute victory.

The Doctor takes a good ten seconds deciding to ditch Christina, hooks a couple of the stereotypes up with UNIT jobs, and takes off... But not before a psychic warning from a Magical Black Lady tells him what we've already known for some time: He's not going to last much longer.

Recap: It's nighttime in the International Gallery, and with great precision a bunch of police or security guys stand all around this one exhibit, a gold cup of some kind, which is also guarded by lasers. So there's five guards, plus lasers, because that's how important this thing is, but of course the cupola directly above the exhibit is removable, and some kind of ninja comes down on wires and steals the cup from above, and then zips back up into the sky. A confusing mix of due diligence and weird loopholes they've got going at this gallery, but then, a confusing mix of due diligence and lazy-ass bullshitery is this episode.

So then there's one of those lucky happy kitties waving at a guard, and he pulls the alarm, and on some other level the ninja takes off her mask and prepares to have herself a big old smugfest, but before she can clap herself on the back for the first of many, many obnoxious times she'll be doing so, she has to run for it! Then outside, they're arresting her partner, so she smugs, "Sorry, lover!" and runs off in the other direction, which infuriates some nameless cop dude we never actually get to know

or care about whatsoever, who is some kind of detective who is obsessed with tracking this asshole down, but we have to find that out from context because, like much else about this episode, characterization is phoned in to a degree we did not know what possible until now.

A bus pulls up and the thief is like, "I don't have a paying device! What is 'money'?" because she's aristocratic and all, and gives the driver her diamond earrings, because she's so rushed, and then the Doctor gets on by psychic-papering the card-reader, and then he's like, "Everybody on this bus is paper-thin and irritating, but which one's scorchingly obnoxious enough to take eyes off my own scenery-chewing? Which person here is the most like rubbing sandpaper on an infant's skin whenever she opens her fucking mouth? Because *that* will be my BFF."

So the Doctor sits down next to her and starts babbling, like he does, and gives her his chocolate orange and has some irritating science fiction device that he woggles about and yells at for awhile, and all the idiots on the bus stare at him because blimey isn't he strange, and then the nameless asshole cop somehow manages to cordon off both sides of this tunnel in order to cage the history thief, but the Doctor locates some "Rhondium particles," and then the little satellite dish on his thing starts going around, and shoots sparks at this irritating older lady, and he apologizes -- "Sorry, that was my little dish!" -- and then he tells everybody, including the ninja who is named Christina, to hold on tight. Some irritating/cute kid comes flying out of the WC, and then they go through a wormhole.

The cops on either side of the tunnel, back in London, spend quite a while getting their heads around that one, and the mean cop guy goes, "Argh!" Because he's like so dedicated to tracking down Christina, because... Who cares? You don't get to know. You're stupid enough not to ask. You've seen an obsessed cop before, on TV, so just substitute whatever his motivation is, and remember to be lazier.

There's a very *DW* trippy wannabe-cinematic deal with the Doctor eyes staring and then the hot, hot desert day where they've found themselves. The Doctor leads them out into the open air, which they can breathe, and they stand around in the sand, and all the people are scared, and they wander around Tatooine for awhile while aliens in gabardine and gloves watch them and point angrily while clicking and burping.

Back on the bus, a magical black lady is having some kind of fit. Her husband (black, magical level "so-so") wants her to get out of the bus so that she doesn't cook, starting with her brains, and her brains are like,

Too late! She goes on and on about generic oracular shit, "the voices are all around us," whatever, you can hear whispering, it's dumb, it turns out the whispering is dead folks. Meanwhile, the Doctor is playing with sand and one of the interchangeable people is like, "Three suns! No way!" They do the whole "That's impossible"/"Yet it's happening" thing, which is obligatory, and the "just like when the Daleks or whatever stole Earth last year" callback thing, and then they talk about the tires and how they're stuck in the sand, as if that's the problem here.

Cops being dicks to each other, and then the Doctor notices Christina putting on sunglasses and thus being more obnoxious than he is, so he sonic the glasses and all is right again. She asks his name, and they do that whole rigmarole, and the only interesting or original line of it is, "You're called The Doctor? That's not a name, that's a psychological condition." Then the Doctor eats some of the sand, evincing a possible second psychological condition.

While the Doctor figures out something troubling about the sand and puts her off as to what it is, one of the interchangeable people comes running up yelling about how the Doctor was babbling about his little machine before, so probably they should go on a witch hunt. The Doctor points out that these interchangeable people are interchangeable with the interchangeable people from "Midnight," an episode I thought was fucking irritating at the time but had a lot going for it, I now realize, by comparison.

I mean shit, there's like two episodes all year between Christmas and New Year's Doctor, you'd think somebody would have put in some effort. I mean, there are some very sneaky/smart lines and themes that I think reward the paying-attention viewer with a fairly complete picture of how the rest of 2009 is going to go down, but they're placed like gems in a pile of shit and it's like, do you even really want a beautiful shiny gem when it's covered with that?

Anyway, the Rhondium detector was tracking a "hole in the fabric of reality," which grew to a bus-sized size and ate a bus, which was them. He tosses some sand at nothing, and the nothing wobbles, because it's a wormhole and that's what wormholes do when you throw sand at them. Well, that's not true. Certain kinds of wormholes are sand-wobbly, but that's like basic science. The driver goes, "Let's just go back through the hole!" and the Doctor goes, "Don't," so the driver does, and the Doctor gets very Willy Wonka for some reason like, "No Augustus Gloop don't do it come back," but the driver pays no heed and turns into a skeleton as

the flesh is burnt off his bones, and the skeleton flops onto the pavement in front of the cops back in London, and one of the helpful interchangeable people awesomely goes, "*He was bones, just bones!*" Asshole Cop Guy is like, "Call UNIT. That guy was just bones."

The Doctor and Christina and one of the interchangeable people have a short discussion about **Faraday cages**, because they are smartypantses, and the Doctor technobabbles for no reason in case you were thinking maybe there was not enough metal in this particular bus to serve as a Faraday cage going through the wormhole, like, *maybe if you called bullshit on that*, the Doctor goes, "Slightly different dynamics with a wormhole. There's enough metal to make it work, I think. *I hope.*" Spotty attempts. It's like if you were staying in a hotel that was on fire, and they're like, "We're so sorry the Pay-Per-View isn't working! Here's a free breakfast voucher." And you're like, "Fuck breakfast, my granddad's on fire," and they're like, "Yes, but he gets a senior discount on breakfast! Just one of our little ways of showing customer appreciation."

Christina outlines the problem -- "we have to drive five tons of bus, which is currently buried in the sand, and we've got nothing but our bare hands" -- and the solution, which is applying themselves to the problem with discipline! I couldn't agree more, which bums me out because on paper she is so awesome, but in the flesh she is so unbearable. I wasn't that put off by her the first time I watched it, but on subsequent viewings it's *excruciating*. I think I finally understand why people got so weird about **Reinette**. So anyway, she orders everybody around and is generally the cutest goddamn thing for about a year, and the Doctor's sort of charmed about it, and they get on the bus, and thankfully we skip to the end of her condescending speech, and she tells the Doctor to start talking.

Instead, magical black lady gets all magical on his ass and explains that the wormhole is not a naturally occurring phenomenon, but whatever, and they stop talking about their impending deaths so they can have a whole long drawn-out thing about how magical black lady is magical, not in a huge way but in a like, "We win ten pounds every week in the lottery" way, and the Doctor figures out that, much like Kal-El under a yellow sun, this stupid planet has increased her magical blackness by some factor where now she can see how many fingers he's holding up behind his back. Also, "death" is coming, on the wind, and "shining."

At this news, all the interchangeables get interchangeably charged up and start screaming and yelling at each other, and one of them starts

crying, and then the Doctor asks her where she was going, before the wormhole, and they talk about that and torture themselves with thoughts of home, but it's meant to be comforting. What it is, is beyond fucking annoying, and the music is like, "Aww," because these two-dimensional people already have the most obvious personalities so you already know where they're going. The white lady has a niece or some shit. The young white kid lost his job and wants to watch movies or eat snacks or something. "Telly" at his "flat" at the top of the "apples and pears" or whatever. Whatever sucks. The black kid has a girlfriend, or a potential girlfriend, and the ninja is on the run, and the magical black people like to eat lambchops.

It's violently stupid, all of it. So he tells them to just remember home and that he's going to get them home, et cetera, and once again it's hard to figure out how David Tennant is capable simultaneously of both bombast and complete disinterest. It's like he's eating the scenery, but wishes he had some salt or Worcestershire sauce or something. And angels sing in a choir and there's light and magical wonderment and they almost bust into applause right there. But just you wait.

UNIT arrives on the scene in London, and the nameless UNIT lady has a talk with the nameless shitty cop, and they both give their names, but fuck that, and he acts all insane and obsessive because that's his whole personality, and she acts all hardcore and professional and deadly, and her guys point their guns at the invisible wormhole, because that's UNIT's whole personality.

The first plan to get the bus moving is to put it on padding from the seats, "like duckboards," whatever that means, and whatever, Christina knows fucking everything and she's so fucking amazing and she pulls a folding shovel and a folding axe and a folding Maserati and a folding refrigerator full of folding fucking food and a folding living room with a folding cozy recliner or whatever out of her backpack because she's like Mary Poppins only *even more remarkable*, and then the Doctor realizes that the engine is all clogged with sand anyway, so he wanders away into the desert for... No reason whatsoever.

While the interchangeable people work on the bus, the Doctor and Christina flirt or something. I don't know what you would call it. It's like a cockfight, if the point of a cockfight were for the roosters to fuck each other. Which, I've never seen a cockfight, so who knows, but my understanding is that the name is somewhat misleading. So they both throw their chests out and act like badasses and it's too embarrassing to

even look at, and they say things like, "Let's just say we're two equal mysteries" and they talk about how they're quite a couple, whatever. I *think* that the point is that she would make a really great Companion, but he's too blinded by grief and bloody-mindedness to give in to the pressure and take her along. But it's hard to see that point because she's so fucking awful that its brightness eclipses all rational thought.

They discuss the wormhole and whatnot, and she introduces herself ("To be precise, Lady Christina de Souza"), and he makes the comparison that he's also a Lord of some sort, "quite a big estate," actually, and she's like, "Also, you're an alien obviously," but he changes the subject, and yells "Allons-y!" and she chatters back in French, because *of course she fucking does*, and there's an oncoming storm on the horizon that will rip everybody to shreds if it's a sandstorm. Which why would it be, the Doctor asks, forgetting that they are on a PLANET MADE OF SAND, which is just again lazy writing, because he's only saying that because it's not, obviously, sand.

They go back to the bus, where magical black lady is being magical, and the Doctor sonics his cell phone and calls UNIT, well, first he calls Geronimo's Pizza by accident, which is what passes for humor right now in this bullshit, and then he calls UNIT, and they hand the phone over to the mean UNIT lady, Erisa, who salutes over the phone even though he can't see it, and he makes a fuss about that as usual, and they talk about how he's stuck on the desert planet with some irritating people, and coincidentally she's on the other side of the wormhole with some *even more irritating people*, namely a Dr. Malcolm Taylor, who is one of those geniuses who could be really attractive if he would just cut it the fuck out. But no.

So she puts the phone on speaker, and Malcolm gets ten kinds of gay on the Doctor (calling him, think about this, "the Doctor-Doctor") and Erisa is like, "We all want to meet him one day. But we all know what that day will bring," which is also sort of notable, and the Doctor enjoys the feeling of Malcolm crawling all over him like a long-distance jungle gym for awhile before getting back to the topic, which is... Science of some kind, there's a wormhole and a storm and an unmoving bus and a bunch of shitty civilians, so what can we do. Well, first we need to talk about how Malcolm invented a unit of measurement called the malcolm, which is one one-hundredth of a bernard, which is named after Quatermass, which is a failed joke in the opposite way of the other failed jokes in this episode, which is all this episode essentially is, and the interesting thing of this scene is that, and normally I would make much of this but the

episode is so shitty that I'm not inclined to reward it with any amount of effort at all, Malcolm can see and measure the wormhole because he's set his scanner to detect what it can't detect, then reversed the image, creating an image of what you can't see. Which is a gem.

So the Doctor and Malcolm nuzzle and lick each other's science for awhile and then the Doctor hangs up on him, and the aliens are still angrily poking at their screen and clicking and burping at them, and the Doctor takes pictures of the oncoming storm, which in case you didn't catch that one, the magical lady goes, "So fast and strong, they ride the storm. They are the storm. They devour!" And meanwhile, the Doctor and Christina are taken prisoner by the clicking-burping people, who are humanoids with the faces and segmented eyes of your common housefly. Inside their ship, it's very cold because of made up metal that does that, gets colder the hotter it is, and the Doctor goes, "Since I met you, Christina, we've been through all the extremes!" and she goes, "That's how I like things. Extreme!" and you just want to punch them both in the throat.

So there's a whole miscommunication where of course Christina assumes that these folks had something to do with their being pulled through the wormhole, and the folks themselves assume that the bus and its associated interchangeable assholes had something to do with their spaceship crashing. But of course neither of these things is true, because there's the oncoming storm that did both. The Doctor acts generally embarrassing and explains that the people -- "Tritovores," as in *detritus*, right, because Rowling is just the best we can do -- are having spaceship trouble, which the Doctor self-congratulatingly kicks back into operation.

While their civilian charges are frying in the desert with actual psychic-verified death flying at their boiling faces, the Doctor and Christina kick back in an air-conditioned spaceship and watch a movie. The Tritovores, the movie and the unending clicking explain, were traveling here to Sanhelios to trade their wares for, um, shit, because they are flies, but when they got here it was just sand, even where they are chilling out, which used to be the capital city of the whole planet, but is not also sand. Sand, the Doctor explains, made up of city and oceans and mountains and wildlife and 100 billion dead people. Christina wigs out because that means she's got dead folks in her hair, because women are so flighty about that kind of thing, especially if their parents have money, and isn't that hilarious: "Something destroyed the whole of Sanhelios," he goes, and she's like, "Yes, but in my hair!" You know who acts like this? Fucking nobody real.

Malcolm calls to heavy-breathe about the Doctor some more, and UNIT lady is like, "Hey, by any chance does this expanding wormhole constitute a danger to our planet? Because, like, I'm in UNIT?" The Doctor hangs up on her instead of answering the question, because he knows that no answer he gives her will stop her from immediately jumping to some retarded conclusion and blowing up the universe, because that's always how UNIT rolls.

What's so frustrating is that important shit happens in this story -- for example, Lady Christina says aloud what I think will be the key phrase to the entire 2009 series of specials -- but we can't talk about that yet, because I always get yelled at for using my intuition to figure that stuff out without saying SPOILER WARNING, even though it's not actually a spoiler, just putting things together a child could figure out, so let's just say this episode will be, I think, much more important, but no less shitty, in retrospect.

Meanwhile the interchangeable people have run down the bus's engine trying to make it start, despite knowing that it won't start. The Doctor ignores their panicked calls so they can look at a hologram of the things making up the storm, which are basically these huge metal manta rays that look unsurprisingly like *Pitch Black* monsters, and the Doctor and Christina figure out that they are able to traverse the wormholes because they are made of metal, and that presumably they want to use the wormhole now to get to Earth and turn it into sand. The Doctor unconvincingly talks himself into figuring out -- get this -- that the beasts can fly so fast around and around a planet that they create the wormholes, or some such nonsense.

The Doctor and Christina agree that they only feel completely alive when things are super shitty, and they crush irritatingly on each other for awhile and then run back to the bus, toward which the monsters are also swarming, and where the one psychic lady is being psychic. "The girl," she says inconsequentially, "She will fly." If you're thinking she means *in the mouth of a horrible manta ray*, I'd uncross those fingers now. Christina explains irritatingly that the Doctor's missing the point, which is that there's some other reason than the beasties that the Tritovores crashed, because it wasn't a wormhole that did it to them. The Doctor discusses this with the flies, and figures out that they have some kind of a crystal setup that makes things fly, so they run around like lunatics and -- in case you thought there was some kind of second level on which anybody associated with this episode had an ounce of dignity -- explains that they can drive the bus using this crystal, "in a super-clever

outer-spacey way."

They run around the ship for awhile, and Christina finally decides to use her ninja powers to get this crystal from their engine room, crowing, "The aristocracy survives for a reason!" and once again trumpeting her readiness for all contingencies. So the whole time she's clipping herself into her apparatus and putting her hair back, the Doctor's babbling, and he finally figures out what she's doing, and stresses because she's going to electrocute herself on their security grid -- emphasis on *cute!* -- so he sonics her wire, and she deactivates the security thing with a big shiny red button, and once she's hanging over the crystal, they realize that at least one of the beasts is sleeping in the engine room, so there's a seat-of-the-pants moment where it seems like the monster will eat her, bless him, but she gets pulled back up at the last second and electrocutes the thing in the security grid as she's being hauled back.

This impresses the Doctor no end, even though she calls him "Spaceman" and reminds him about Donna, which reminds him about Rose and Martha and Jack and all, Kylie Minogue and Jackson, so he gets sad and standoffish, and takes a moment to discuss with her about how he's an alien with a time machine before finding the stolen Cup of Athelstan, given to the first King of Britain as a coronation gift from Hywel, King of Wales, and nattering at her about being a thief. She thinks he's going to get obnoxious about it, but instead he goes all dreamy and points out that stealing is his lifestyle too, for example his time machine, which he stole from his people to begin with.

Then the beasts start moving around inside the ship, and they try to abandon it, but the flies attack one of the monsters and are dispatched despite being offered a home on Earth by Christina, which is another very Doctor/Companion move. They run around for four million years, and then make it to the bus, where psychic lady helpfully says all psychically, "Run run run run run!" And the Doctor clamps some things to some stuff, to the wheels, and keeps hanging up on Malcolm, who in the midst of much technobabble has discovered a way to close the wormhole, which UNIT's own Erisa wants him to do despite the Doctor almost having saved the bus, and Malcolm can't because he's in love with the Doctor, so he ends up of course with a gun in his face, and this look like, "Shit, I completely forgot I work for UNIT."

So it turns out that the Doctor didn't actually need the crystal, but the thing it came in, which he straps to the bus's steering wheel, but it doesn't quite work. Maybe this is also a reference to Donna:

"Bus/spaceship, spaceship/bus. I need to weld the two systems together." Maybe this is also a reference to alchemy, in fact: "I need something non-corrosive, something malleable, something ductile, something... Gold." Like the Cup of Hasselbeck or whatever. Christina protests, but he promises he'll be careful with it, and when she finally pulls it out of her backpack the music goes so intensely magical that you might be pardoned for thinking this makes her the new King of England. Then the Doctor bashes the fuck out of it with her hammer, and she's like, "Oi!"

They get it working, and everybody claps like idiots, and they fly through the wormhole, and everybody yells at once, and are shoved around by forces and science, and a couple of the interchangeable people are like, "The bus is flying! He's flying the bus!" in case the others weren't aware, and Malcolm with the gun in his face goes: "I will never surrender. Never." This episode is like the Tritovores: Trying to recycle what better people left behind, but coming up with just sand. I mean, how sad would it be if, having accustomed yourself to eating actual shit, you ended up in a place where there wasn't even shit to eat? Depressing. That's what this is like: The arid ghost of an attempt at eating what was already someone else's full meal.

OMG the flying bus for a million years, and UNIT of course aiming guns at everything, but they don't shoot down the bus, and then the monsters come through behind them, and UNIT blows the hell out of them, and Malcolm shuts down the wormhole, and Christina obligatorily snogs the Doctor while the interchangeables all clap like idiots for like the eighth time, and UNIT takes custody of the interchangeable people to see if they have alien planet viruses and that kind of thing, and Dr. Malcolm runs over and starts humping the Doctor's shin, literally, with the Doctor and UNIT's own Erisa smiling smarmily over his head and having a grudging respect for each other. He tells her he'll do his best to keep their natural manta ray lifecycle off of inhabited worlds, and tells her to hire two of the interchangeables to be in UNIT, and then she pulls the TARDIS out of her ass and there's more applause from all quarters. I'm not kidding.

The rest of the interchangeable people get on their cell phones, but Christina has a date with Javert, who comes running and yelling, and she pulls the Doctor aside and says she's ready to roll. "Come on, Doctor! Show me the stars!" No. "But I saved your life. And you saved mine!" So? "So my ass is going to prison for stealing things!" Yeah? "But you were right, it's not about the money. I only steal things for the adventure, and today, with you... I want more days like this. I want every day to be like

this. We're made for each other, you said so yourself. The perfect team..."

Suddenly the acting improves a thousandfold, and we get actually committed, authentic performances out of them both for this one scene. He's impassive, and so, so sad, and she gets it but she asks him why anyway, and he's like, Companions die or otherwise get depressing on me, and I'm sick of it. So off to jail with you! They arrest her, and the hurt and betrayal in her eyes is really effective, as is the million things going on with the Doctor, and all the hate for them both being such irritating bastards just sort of trails away. I wish the rest of the episode had earned this scene, because it really is brilliant.

But then magical black lady comes up and magicals at him about how he's going to regenerate come Christmas, his "song is ending," which is sort of an odd thing to say innit, and also: "It is returning. It is returning through the dark. And then, Doctor... Oh, but then... He will knock four times."

He stares after her, looking terrified and sad and just generally nuts, but I don't get it. Somebody psychic says that shit to him every day of his life, and it's always true, and he never gives a fuck, but this time he takes it to heart. And I mean, after YANA I'm tired of that manipulative silly "he will knock four times" deal. I really want this season of specials to be more than a warmed-over redux of the last four years. You know how *rarely* I get soppy about the characters on this show, how *deeply averse* I am to that, but still: it seems disrespectful to Rose and especially Donna to replay any of this. There should be consequences. But going there like this, I wonder. "It" is probably Daleks, because it's *always* fucking Daleks, and "the dark" is probably the Void, because ditto, and I'm guessing "he" is pretty obvious too, since it's always the same "he." But I sort of thought the end of Martha's season was a rerun of "42," and I'd hate to think we're dipping into that well for the third time with this last season, especially since we've now visited the whole "bad things happen when the Doctor doesn't have Companions and/or marital-rapes them" thing twice, so I guess we'll see. Buffalo buffalo, etc.

So he sonics Christina's handcuffs, and possibly -- I don't know how you do things over there, but here the cop cars don't open from inside -- the cop car, and she runs off with some precious *E.T.* music playing, past the cops, past the TARDIS, past everybody, past the interchangeable bastards who are still fucking clapping about nothing whatsoever, and then into the bus, which she -- with Javert yelling outside -- takes to the sky, and stops by the TARDIS and says they could have been so good together, and

the Doctor somewhat awesomely goes, "We were!" And as the interchangeables clap like retards one last time, she takes off in the bus as smugly as she arrived. So the Doctor gets in the TARDIS with some kind of smarmy smile on his face and it's finally, finally over. That was the stupidest goddamn thing. And not in that, "Oh, sorry it wasn't pretentious enough for you, *Jacob*" way either. It was *actually stupid*.

LATER THIS YEAR: Water, Mars, haggard people, haggard people turning into water. On Mars. *The Waters of Mars*. Followed on Arbor Day by *The Air Up There*, in which Jackson Lake's TARDIS balloon will make a reappearance and impregnate the Doctor's TARDIS, and then -- just in time for Kwanzaa -- the penultimate 2009 special *Fire On Babylon*, in which the Companions sharing the TARDIS will be Sinead O'Connor and a handful of cornflakes, whose company the Doctor will regretfully decline.

HE MAN WHO WAS SUNDAY

By **Jacob Clifton** | Season 4 | Episode 16 | Aired on 12.18.2009

The Waters Of Mars - The Doctor starts a nasty brawl at the wake for Earth's first Mars mission.

Recaplet: What a bummer!

So the Doctor ends up at the first human Mars base, a few decades hence. He quickly realizes that the Benetton Ad running the place is doomed to die, and fights himself majorly to get out of the way. Seems the head of the project, in dying, will inspire the future of human galactic exploration through her descendents. Trouble is, he becomes quite taken with her -- as you will too -- and can't quite seem to let it go.

Creatures from long ago, imprisoned in Mars's glaciers by the wise Ice Warriors, attack the station's workers one by one, infecting them through the water. What this does is make you spazz out, get Creepy-Eye and Gross-Mouth disease, and then drool uncontrollably from your face and arms. It does not sound that terrifying but it is huge amounts of terrifying.

While the woman Adelaide watches her life's work and closest friends quickly done in, knowing she'll be dying presently, the Doctor continues to wig out about how he -- the similarity in title to "The Fires Of Pompeii" is no accident -- must protect this fixed moment, since that's his entire job as a Time Lord.

But then he goes Donna on himself and realizes that, as the Last of the Time Lords, he doesn't actually have to worry about it. He saves what's left of the crew, blows the beasties all to hell, and drops the survivors on Earth. That's when it gets interesting: Even the Dalek knew that Adelaide's life and death were off-limits, and left her alive as a child -- so what's that say about the Doctor's newfound carelessness?

One of the survivors is driven half-crazy by the TARDIS and runs off into the snow. Adelaide calls bullshit on the manic Doctor, explaining that nobody should have enough power to completely reroute timelines. In a last act of defiance -- and in the hopes of getting the Doctor's shit together for him -- Adelaide blows her brains out. While the Doctor reconsiders what he's becoming, the Cloister Bell starts ringing and Ood Sigma appears to him as a reminder that his song is ending after all.

Recap: You wanted her to love you.

That's what it comes down to, isn't it? You wanted to think there was a point. A point at which, a point at which the fear and the power would be overcome by the love. You wanted to go back to the place where everything was safe. Where somebody would stop you. But we're well beyond that point now. You're past the point where love matters. The angel took you to the precise point, the exact moment. And then the bells began to play.

It doesn't matter now; these are fixed points. These are the moments,

the spaces in time, where your hearts stopped beating and the drums began. It's all you wanted. That point, that precise quiet point, flying above all that... Mess. That chaos. Where you could twist in the storm and just be loved. Be real, be the doctor. Doctor us. Be the Doctor, and rest.

But somewhere in time there's a lady, an older lady, watching a vid screen. And you're there. Little sick eyes, little secret imagination watching. All the things you'll never have; all the men you'll never be. She's talking to her daughter, who's giving her daughter in turn a little jolt, a pretty little wave, as she cries out and whispers. As she reaches out toward the screen, like she's trying to meet her -- all the way across the solar system, she'll reach for Adelaide. Her grandmother, who dies today.

She's been gone for two years; her kids are nearly over missing her, and it makes her sad. Every time she tries to say something the solar flares act up. She knows this, and that her daughter can't hear her, urging her to talk faster, talk faster, so she can hear it all before she's gone. And then she's gone.

The Doctor lands on Mars in a funny red spacesuit with a yellow helmet, wandering away from the TARDIS with a huge smile on his face. Davros said he ran, and kept running, out of shame. But it isn't shame, it's pain. Without a home to go home to, Earth is all he's got, and she keeps breaking his heart. Watch.

Yuri's joking around outside Bowie Base One while they watch him on the cameras, inside. He's wasting time, but it's just a joke: A solar panel, painted brightly with NO TRESPASSERS. It's a joke, because there's nobody here. Some of them inside are charmed but most of them are just spread too thin. "We come all this way, to an empty planet, untouched by civilization, and what do we do? Put up cheap jokes. That's not funny, that's pollution!" Ed's the reliable one; there's a whole story there, but we only see pieces of it. Adelaide comes in, a little edgy from seeing her daughter, and yells at them all, especially Ed, but after two years it's hard to take her seriously.

The Doctor is surprised on a ridge, staring down at the lovely base, by a robot with a gun. It's grimy-white, dingy and spidery, kludged together. Not shiny. He goes "Gadget-Gadget" when he talks, and his name is Gadget. We're going to pretend he doesn't exist, to the degree we're able. Bit later Adelaide's pointing a gun at the Doctor: "State your name, rank, and intention."

"The Doctor. Doctor. Fun."

Say what you will, but Lady Christina de Souza at least gave him that back. As much as Jackson Lake reminded him to be brave. The crew runs around yelling about how there's a mysterious man on Mars and how exciting this is for them, and Adelaide tells them to shut it, and the Doctor babbles at her about not pointing the gun at him, and she goes -- this bit is funny -- she goes, "Oh, you'd like that!" And you know, like, "Can you find me someone who wouldn't?" Brooks asks him why she should trust him, and he gives her his word, and points out that forty million miles away from home, that's all she's going to get.

They lock eyes and he does that thing he does, and she drops the gun but keeps the robot trained on him. So now he has a whole conversation about the robot with the robot driver, who is a sort of unbalanced-seeming emo kid that looks like he smells of energy drink and desperate masturbation, and then we transition via a comms link interchange (with more of that "She's the boss and hard-ass but wink-wink" stuff where nobody really listens to her but everybody fiercely loves her) to the lovely hydroponics garden area, where two more crew are chatting at length about this and that. They talk about how they love plants and how this is a New Eden and whatever, and as she's advancing the theory that the new man on Mars is from the Philippines, or maybe Spain, he's dying.

He bites into a carrot, he falls to his knees, and shivers, first quietly and then violently, and somewhere in there he's dying. He doesn't answer her with speech. There is the sound of water. She tries to get his attention, and finally he turns. His face is terrifying: Broken lips, water everywhere and coming from everywhere, plastering his hair to his face. Black teeth, white eyes: A negative, a reversal. It's uncanny, and as everyone said when they saw the episode, more frightening than it has the right to be.

The Doctor has quickly become bored with the crew's ongoing attempts to guess at his origin ("Was it the Branson inheritance lot? They've talked about a Mars shot for years") and finally kicks them forward, into the story.

"So I'm the Doctor, and you are?"

The very first off-world colonists in Earth history, is who they are: He's standing on Bowie Base One, established the First of July in the year of Our Lord 2058. The Base has been up and running for seventeen months. It all clicks and the Doctor laughs. "My head is so stupid, you're Captain

Adelaide Brooke! Died 2059. And Ed! You're Deputy Edward Gold." He points them out: Tarak Ital, MD, and Nurse Yuri Kerenski. Senior Technician Steffi Ehrlich and Junior Technician Roman Groom. Geologist Mia Bennett, who is only 27 years old. Who was only 27 years old, today, the Twenty-First day of November in the year of Our Lord 2059: The day she died.

The Doctor apologizes -- "I'm sorry with all of my hearts" -- but it's one of those fixed moments, like Pompeii: "One of those very rare times when I've got no choice." It was the Mars disaster. The kind of tragedy that brings us closer to the universe. He shakes their hands, lovingly, like a dumbstruck fan, ready to go, even as they're inviting the gardeners to come see the strange man before he vanishes again. But it's already started.

There's a strange growling on the comms and they can't get the gardens' cameras going; an external shot shows the lights shutting down, one by one. Adelaide orders the Doctor to accompany her out there, to see what's going on; he swears he's leaving and she has one of them lock up his spacesuit. "This started as soon as you arrived, so you're not going anywhere. Except with me." He accedes, worried.

On the walk Adelaide interrogates him about his strangeness, his mysterious change of heart, the way he focused on their names and the date, on Mia's age. Over the comms the Doctor makes friends with the unbalanced emo kid, who pilots the stupid robot along with them as they go; he asks Captain Adelaide if it was worth it. "We've got excellent results from the soil analysis," she answers, confused, but he means something larger. He means something you can't possibly say in words, because he needs to believe it: "All of it. Because they say you sacrificed everything. Devoted your whole life, to get here." Her back straightens, strong: "It's been chaos back home. Forty long years. The climate, the ozone, the oil apocalypse. We almost reached extinction. Then to fly above that... To stand on a world with no smoke, where the only straight line is the sunlight...? Yes. It's worth it." The Doctor smiles, and loves her: "That's the Adelaide Brooke I always wanted to meet. The woman with starlight in her soul!"

(But lurking somewhere in that brightness is something else, a desperate need: "We almost reached extinction," she said. "To fly above that," she said. For a whole planet, a whole people, to almost reach extinction -- it must have propelled her, must it not, out into the stars? To dwell always in the moment of her people's extinction wouldn't do for Captain

Adelaide, no: Not the woman with starlight in her soul. She'd tell you, "Fly above it." Stop being the Last of anything and become the First of something else. Become something victorious. Because then it's not loneliness, you see, or heartbreak, but a most wonderful adventure again. Flying high above it.)

Maggie, the woman who was there in the garden when it started, is still breathing. They send her back to sickbay with Nurse Yuri, and Ed -- the oldest of the crew, the one with a strange story in the negative space between himself and Adelaide -- runs out, terrified, toward the dome. When he reaches his Captain, he explains that she needs backup. If it was Andy, the dead man, that attacked her -- if it wasn't an accident, and they're the only people out here -- that means Andy's gone over. Adelaide gives Ed an official warning for desertion of post, and sends him back to work. She takes the Doctor further in.

Back at the bridge, they've isolated the growling on the computer and definitely confirmed it as Andy's voice. Adelaide thanks them, and they head out into the garden. "Andy? Report. I need to see you. Where are you?" The Doctor sonics the lights back on -- "Are you the Doctor or the Janitor," she asks, which delights him: "I don't know, sounds like me. The maintenance man of the universe!" -- and they go looking. She tells him affectionately, now that they're alone, about the crew, how they're already planning Christmas dinner. "Last year it was dehydrated protein, this year they want the real thing." And there are birds, flying through the gardens, to keep the insects in check. A carefully realized, well-planned ecosystem; now, as good a sign as mineshaft parakeets, still flying around.

Yuri's proud to announce that Maggie's awake and, head hurting, is taking it easy. She's still on quarantine for 24 hours, and still -- between you and me -- looking a tad nuts. Everybody discusses everything else, but Adelaide finally points out that security is at a premium and they need to stop chattering on the open channels. "You know the rules," she keeps saying, trying to draw the lines around herself that will keep them all alive: "You know the rules."

Two years like this, in their company, maybe the hierarchy is a little rusty, they need reminding now that there's an emergency. Maybe she hits it a little too hard, trying to get the balance right: Between leader and friend, crew and family, mother and Captain. Maybe she fell in love with Ed, a little bit, and has only just remembered how dangerous that is. For him, for her. Too human.

Or maybe she's on Bad Wolf Bay, watching Rose run to the wilder twin. Maybe she's in Chiswick, watching Donna roll her eyes and turn back to the phone, feeling one heart breaking right after the other. Maybe letting insubordination rule in those two years of safety and warmth felt better than this; maybe she's wishing she could pull them all into a cabinet behind her, forever. Maybe she's reminding herself that starlight in your soul means loneliness with every sunrise, and all of this was only play. Or a wonderful dream. Or maybe she's just terrified. Another crewman finally locates Andy in the gardens, dripping with such water, arms limply thrown out, dripping down. He shakes and stares.

The solar flares mean Yuri has to watch a repeat message from his brother, who's telling a hilarious story about his husband's spending habits that I guess you have to be Russian to fully understand why it's funny, and in order to make the story even more boring he shows Maggie a map of Earth and where Dagestan lies, on the Caspian Sea. But she's already dead.

"By the sea," it says, and Yuri says it's more like a lake. "Earth is so much water," it says lustily. Yuri yearns for home. "It has so much beauty. We should like that world," it grunts, strangely, and Yuri turns. Her pupils are still normal, but her teeth are scary and she's vomiting great gouts of water through a cruel smile. Sickbay has a situation, he explains on comms, and says it's like she's drowning. Adelaide tries to collect her lost crewman so they can bounce, but he's already dead.

He kneels at the foot of Andy, shivering and shaking; they are both bathed in water. The Doctor begs Andy to stop, promising he can help. They break the tableau, the Doctor and the Captain, but only long enough to get a good look at the men, who are both now dead. They stare and drip; the Doctor and Adelaide run. The things give chase, and it takes a really long time. They lock the doors behind them, just barely a hair's breadth to safety, and the things shoot water out of their hands somehow, great deluges like firehoses. One of them stares at them through the door, and then begins to examine the seals around the door. The Doctor speaks portentously about how water is the most powerful thing. Essentially, it's like time: It keeps rushing, on and on, wearing you down, wearing anything down. Water waits.

Ed comes to sickbay, where Maggie is now staring and smiling and shooting water implacably at the windows. She is manic, and scary. Everybody freaks out all over the place, and Adelaide comms everybody to avoid all water supplies of any kind. "Don't drink the water. Don't even

touch it. Not one drop." Andy smiles through the door at the Doctor, and he wonders if the things can talk. He points out to Adelaide that we're 60% water, which makes us the perfect host for whatever this is. Which thing precisely he does not know, and never will, because he is leaving. "Whatever's started here, I can't see it to the end. I can't."

Andy shoves himself up against the door, and the other one's shooting water at the edges. They're fusing the system, whatever that means, and run down a previous corridor, and come up against the robot, which the Doctor sonics so that he is now controlling the robot, which -- because the guy is strapped into a whole device for operating the robot -- means that he is *also controlling Roman's body*.

(As a person who has been foretelling the Doctor's descent into theocratic megalomania since the Martha season, that gave me the creeps. Luckily, this episode is all about the creeps. But there's something weird about a body controlling a robot that gets caught up in its own apparatus. Like a puppeteer being forced to dance around by some sudden tremendous upward force that's pulling on his fingertips, like a waterfall going up.)

So now the stupid robot -- as Adelaide and the Doctor climb aboard -- can go so fast that he lays tracks of fire like Marty McFly. It's sort of chicken/egg to wonder whether robots are naturally embarrassing, or if it's just the retarded shit they do. Maybe this is painful for Roman the dork in some way, I'm not sure why he's screaming. Maybe he's just that embarrassed by this. So then they end up at some doorway that's pretty much the same as the previous doorway, and the same things happen some more. Oh, and the whole episode the Doctor is bugging Adelaide about how they need bicycles even though that would have added prohibitive payload to the initial takeoff and is just basically empty silence that he is filling up with being repetitive, because as good as this episode is, there's not really a whole shitload of stuff that happens in it.

They go check out Maggie, who is staring at the window and splurting water boredly, and Adelaide tries to talk to her but she just stares, and the Doctor talks to her in quote Ancient North Martian, which gets her attention. He also notices that her eyes haven't got full-negative yet, not that she's looking human enough for comfort really, and they explain to the Doctor that they get all their water from a glacier underground in this crater they particularly chose for Bowie Base One. "If something was frozen down there," Ed grunts, "A viral life form, held in the ice for all those years..." Meanwhile, the Doctor notes around Maggie's blackened mouth the telltale signs of quote "some sort of fission" which apparently

indicates that this viral thing "doesn't just *hide* in water, it *creates* water." And Yuri explains that now it, or she, or they, wants to go to watery old Earth. Where it will create even more water. Through "some sort of fission."

None of this makes a goddamn bit of sense. Not a lick of sense does any of that make. Not even on the surface level where I prefer to live does that make sense. Not in a diagram-this-sentence way does it make sense. Maybe that whole part would have been less confusing if they'd just straight up said this stuff, or had one of the racial stereotypes ask an Excellent Question and the Doctor could just have at it, or even called a time-out to be like, "Here is the shitty science in your science fiction," with charts and graphs, instead of pretending it was this conversation where like one thought logically followed another.

Ed reminds Adelaide, in a whispered aside, that this unknown but quickly spreading infection "demands Action Procedure One," and Adelaide is like, "I know that," and they flirt about how she doesn't need reminding about anything but that he's good for something every now and then, and she actually smiles, and then the Doctor interrupts to ask Excellently whether Action One does in fact mean evacuation, and Captain Brooke declares Action One, immediate evac.

The rest of the crew runs around packing everything up, and Adelaide gives them unrealistically tight deadlines to get things ready to go, and the two major water guys are still off in the biodome tunnel, and Maggie and the Doctor are both staring all around at this stuff, because he knows this Action One isn't getting off the ground, and he should really be leaving. He is quiet but you can tell he doesn't want to leave, like at all, and Adelaide gives him his spacesuit back, but his stupid head's been working once again.

The Flood is clever: It didn't infect the birds or bugs, it wanted humans. And, as mentioned, water can wait. When Maggie was infected, it stayed hidden inside, even as Tarak was changing at Andy's hand. Thus it got inside the central dome of Bowie One. Which means, really, that anybody could be infected. So if they take that back to earth -- even just one drop -- they're genocidal. No longer flying above extinction, but drowning in the middle of it.

Adelaide fights this logic: It presumes infection -- and that's a fact that can be confirmed or denied. She heads off to inspect the ice-field, see if she can get some answers about its vector, and the Doctor swears he's leaving this time. Several times, in fact, before running off after her,

screaming her name.

Pompeii was a fixed moment in which twenty thousand people must die: His agreement with Donna was to save just four. Four in twenty thousand, you can miss a few. You can let the rules go slack in your hands just that little bit -- just that minute up past lights-out, just that one contraband cookie you let them sneak onboard -- because you know the fixed moment remains. But what we're only beginning to piece together is that Bowie Base One isn't just a fixed location. Or rather, it's not a single fixed location: Bowie Base One is a collection of deaths. It's not a belching volcano or perverted graffiti or household gods, it's Adelaide dead, Mia and Steffi dead, Tarak and Maggie and Andy dead, Ed and Roman and Yuri. Their dead bodies, exploding on a distant cold planet, to save Earth from the Flood. Flying above their world's extinction.

Yuri apologizes to Maggie in her sickbay cell as he packs the place up. He turns off everything and the system lights go red -- it's even spookier, now -- and she slowly makes her way over to the sickbay doors, fusing them or whatever. The cameras go to static while the rest of the crew stares, hoping she won't come after them. In sickbay, having dispatched the door easily enough, Maggie smiles. Then she begins to scream.

Andy and Tarak head back for the main dome as Adelaide and the Doctor stare down at the ice fields. "They tell legends of Mars, from long ago," he explains, "Of a fine and noble race who built an empire out of snow. The Ice Warriors." I've never seen them, but I've been told I would like them. "Perhaps they found something down there," he continues against Adelaide's protests. "Used their might and their wisdom to freeze it."

Meanwhile, Adelaide's more focused on the story in front of her -- the trees, right, her crew, the idea that stories end and she does not -- and gets more and more irritated by him. Because the point isn't how the Flood got down there, or why it came back up again, but how the water process must have been changed at some point, and how that can date the infection and say who's safe and who is not. The Doctor tries to help, knocking against the screen, as Adelaide considers him.

"You don't look like a coward. But all you've wanted to do is leave. You know so much about us..." The Doctor fakely says it's because they're so famous, but she knows there's more. He takes one look in those stern, lovely eyes, and knows she won't let it go. They keep working, and he tries to explain about fixed moments. "Tiny, precious moments. Everything else is in flux, anything can happen, but those certain

moments, they have to stand. This base, on Mars, with you, Adelaide Brooke, this is one vital moment. What happens here must always happen."

She knows enough to get worried now: "Which is what?" He lies, twisting one way and another, desperate to be anywhere else, hearts moving in separate directions, every instinct screaming at him to run, leave, disappear, except the highest one of all. So he lies instead. "...I don't know." He looks at her face: "I think something wonderful happens." She swallows as he looks at her -- who she is, has been, will be -- and sees her all at once. The Time Lord's burden. "Something that started fifty years ago, isn't that right?" She stares; she's never told a soul. "You told your daughter. And maybe one day she tells the story to her daughter. The day the Earth was stolen and moved across the universe. And you...?"

He watches Adelaide remember. For us, it was only a year ago, when the planets were stolen and the skies replaced. Her father left her hiding in an attic, and went looking for her mother, and they both died. They were never found; this part makes the Doctor saddest. But while she was up there -- in the midst of extinction, flying just a little bit above it; waiting for her family that would never return -- she looked through a skylight at a Dalek, who stared down at her. Down on the streets there was panic, and burning, but up in the sky an alien inspected her, and looked right into her. And she looked up at it, and -- she nearly smiles, now -- it simply went away.

"I knew, that night, I knew I would follow it." *But not for revenge*, the Doctor can see. She still has tears in her eyes when she asks what the point of that would be.

That's what makes her remarkable, and that's how she'll create history: "Imagine it, Adelaide. If you began a journey that takes the human race all the way out to the stars. It begins with you. And then your granddaughter, you inspire her. So that in thirty years Susie Fontana Brooke is the pilot of the first lightspeed ship to Proxima Centauri. And then everywhere. With her children, and her children's children forging the way, to the Dragon Star, the Celestial Belt of the Winter Queen, the Map of the Water Snake Wormholes. One day a Brooke will fall in love with a Tandonian prince, that's the start of a whole new species. But everything starts with you, Adelaide. From fifty years ago, to right here, today. *Imagine*."

She does. And she asks him who he is, and why he is telling her, and the Doctor almost weeps as he gives the only possible answer he can give,

something so clear she could have figured it out for herself: As consolation.

The computer beeps, spitting out their answer: The #3 water filter, Andy reported, busted earlier today. And since the water isn't cycled out of the Biodome for a week, none of them are infected. She radios ahead to Ed as she's running; he's the one piloting their escape shuttle, and it's waking up outside. Everyone's excited, giddy. Even Adelaide. She sends him off after his ship, proud of herself for saving her people. "I know what this moment is: It's the moment we escape!"

The Doctor lingers, unsure and even more afraid, as they rush around. He realizes Tarak is climbing up onto the roof of the dome, which nobody really notices because they're all busy running around and substituting weights in the cold equations, wondering how much food they can safely leave behind, until Tarak and Andy are right over them. Right above them, on the roof. Dripping and flooding great jets of water against every seal and lock. They don't need oxygen, because they breathe water, and they don't need spacesuits because quote "they've got that internal fission," which means the crew is still technically safe but the Flood can last forever and have unlimited amounts of water to use against them, so they are not actually safe. Adelaide finally yells at everybody to pull it together and sends Ed back to the shuttle with a smile.

The Doctor is so sad, as his stupid brain files past everything in slow motion: Their hope, their strength. Their unending rushing around: is it something to be proud of, or just useless folly? He could cry, wondering, watching them stuck in their story. Playing it out again and again, right before his eyes. Adelaide watches him, and wanders why he won't leave, as they move so slowly. He carries his spacesuit out into the lock.

As Ed runs to the shuttle, the airlock closes around the Doctor and refuses to open. "Tell me what happens," comes the voice of Adelaide, and he swears he doesn't know. She's getting angrier as he continues to protest his ignorance, finally offering to crush him in the airlock's pressure. "Except you won't. You could have shot Andy Stone, but you didn't. I loved you for that." She stares; he looks at nothing. "Imagine... Imagine you knew something... Imagine you found yourself somewhere, I don't know, Pompeii. Imagine you were in Pompeii. You try to save them, but in doing so, you... Make it happen. Anything I do just makes it happen."

Steffi calls her away, but she looks up with her strong gaze and

unflinching beauty and she punches him to the main screen, to look him in the face. "You're taking Action One. There are four more standard action procedures." And Action Five is detonation. The final option: the nuclear device at the heart of the Central Dome. "Today, on the 21st November 2059, Captain Brooke activates that device, taking the base and all her crew members with her." She stares. "No one ever knows why."

"But you were saving Earth. That's what inspires your granddaughter. She takes your people out, into the galaxy, because you die on Mars. You die, today. She flies out there," he says indulgently, because now he knows what it is to love Adelaide Brooks: "Like she's trying to meet you". Adelaide promises, swears, begs, dares, commands herself, commands the universe: "I won't die. I will not." *But your death creates the future*, he says. She speaks without pride. "Help me." And the Doctor stares, as she's nearly weeping.

"Why won't you help, Doctor? If you know all of this, why can't you change it? Why can't you find a way?" But he interrupts her. "Sometimes I can, sometimes I do, most times I can save someone, or anyone. But not you. You wondered all your life why that Dalek spared you, I think it knew: Your death is fixed, in time, forever. And that's right." Bargaining now, she reminds him that he'll die too, but at his protest she snarls, "What's gonna save you?" And oh, the look in his eyes when he tells her exactly who.

"Captain Adelaide Brooke."

She lets him go, with a curse, as the water breaks through on the bridge. It cascades down around them, Adelaide shouting orders to jump back and abandon the section. Yuri leads the way toward the shuttle, she calls out orders to everyone simultaneously as the Doctor listens, smiling.

Then, too soon, it's Steffi's turn, cut off from the others by a sudden wall of water, Adelaide screaming that they'll find a way back to her, somehow, they'll find a way to save her. The Doctor makes his way across the red sands in his spacesuit, still listening as they shout, as Steffi locks herself in a small glass cabinet off the main bridge room, and turns on her last message from home, the little German girls telling her jokes, and the crew can't get to her, and she's weeping, holding onto the screen as if she's hanging from it, and then she dies.

Adelaide reroutes the rest of them through another corridor as Ed checks the shuttle systems and gets ready to fly, above it all. Just as he's

finishing up, as Adelaide's shouting at Roman to pull it together and stop staring as another colleague drops in the corridor behind them, and they keep running. And down at the bottom end of the shuttle, just as Ed's closing the hatch, Maggie appears -- smiling and staring -- and shoots water up at him. And Ed's last goodbye is this, as he logs a self-destruct, as his pupils go white: "Hated it, Adelaide. This bloody job. You never gave me a chance. You never could forgive me. See you later." He blows the shuttle, and everybody is thrown around, and out on the sands the Doctor falls to his knees. He looks back, in terror and anguish. Air and fire explode into the vacuum; he can hear them on the radio as they lose oxygen, as everything burns. And he climbs, above and away from it all.

"I'm not just a Time Lord, I'm the *Last* of the Time Lords," he said. "They'll never come back," he said, in equal resentment and loneliness, "Not now." The Doctor stands in flame, watching Bowie One burn. "I've got a TARDIS," he said. "Same old life... Last of the Time Lords... And they died, took it all with them. The walls of reality closed, the worlds were sealed, gone forever... The Time Lords kept their eye on everything. It's gone now... But they died, the Time Lords! All of them, they died. I'm the last of the Time Lords..."

It's one thing he always had in common with every Companion: That loneliness. That unique feeling of being singly gifted and singly afflicted. The last -- or the first -- of something. He's been the last of the Time Lords for so long -- two and a half lives, and counting -- that he hasn't even questioned whether taking all their burdens on his back, shepherding the fixed points, the duty of Rassilon and the screams of dying Pompeii, is worth doing. But the thing about Adelaide, and about her granddaughter Susie, is the way they cross the line from the other side: Confronted with death and enormity, they take their place in the story. You can't hold a six-year-old girl, who has just lost her hero -- like he wants to -- and say "Imagine all the wonderful things about this death."

That's Lonely Angel rhetoric, forest logic, and it doesn't apply to the individual tree. You can't expect anybody to understand that, in the moment of their tragedy. And in this moment, Adelaide striving and fighting for her entire planet and hoping desperately to live -- measuring her own pain against the threat of a world's extinction -- he feels closer to her than he has to anybody since Donna. He can see life as a tree, for just one second.

A second is all it takes. He appears suddenly with them, tossing tools and

barking orders, and helps them save their lives. Adelaide protests, afraid he'll die with them, but the Doctor just laughs. After all, Sigma and Carmen told him he would be dead soon, and that "he" will knock four times, and that means he's not dying here now. Andy knocks at the door, three times, and before he can knock a fourth the Doctor has electrocuted him. He directs Mia and Yuri to use heat against them, smiling. Adelaide's confused: Didn't he just say they had to die? For the future? For the human race?

A terrible light takes him over, behind the eyes; his jaw works madly. "There are laws, there are Laws of Time," he admits. "Once upon a time there were people in charge of those laws, but they died. They all died. Do you know who that leaves? Me! It's taken me all these years to realize the Laws of Time are mine. And they will obey me!" The crew, what's left of them, are shoved about as the environmental crash. His helmet's crushed, but he's not beaten yet. "We're not just fighting the Flood. We're fighting Time itself. And I'm gonna win!"

Maggie screams at the ice, and it begins to crack. The Doctor buzzes with excitement, sounding more like Doctor-Donna than ever: "Thinka thinka thinka think! What have we got? Not enough oxygen! Protein-packs? Useless! Glacier, glacier mints, minty, Monty, molto bene, bunny, Bonny, bish-bash-bosh! Baaaaaaah!" (He sees her, for a moment, just a glimpse before his hearts can't take it anymore: "Binary binary binary binary...") He sends the stupid robot out to the TARDIS with a key in its claw, and sonics the thing away even as Maggie screams. But Adelaide's already set the bomb to blow, and the robot crawls away, pulling and pushing at his body. Water floods the Flood, and they scream in harmony. As the robot opens the TARDIS and Adelaide stares at the mad Doctor, the bomb ticks down. He is manic, and frightening, and proud. There are two seconds left when the TARDIS appears. Bowie Base One is destroyed in a mushroom cloud, and the red planet is quiet. We're left a long time to wonder.

The TARDIS appears on a London street, in the snow. The Doctor leaves, leading Yuri and Mia and the robot and Adelaide out, shivering. Adelaide stays far away from him; Mia looks sick and Yuri's unsure. "Isn't anyone going to thank me?" he asks, and something goes cold in Adelaide. The robot dies quickly, having lost his signal altogether.

"Don't you get it? This is the 21st November, 2059! It's the same day on Earth. And it's snowing! I love snow." Mia loses her shit, freaking out about the TARDIS, and finally runs off down the lane. Adelaide sends Yuri

after her, and turns to stare at the Doctor, horrified.

"Just think, though. Your daughter, and your daughter's daughter, you can see them again. Family reunion!" But Adelaide knows -- knows, now -- that she's supposed to be dead. "My granddaughter, the person she's supposed to become... Might never exist now." The Doctor blows her off, promising that Captain Adelaide can inspire Susie face-to-face now. "Different details, but the story's the same." Adelaide points out that, by his own explanation, he can't know that. And if the Brookes changes, the whole of history could change, the future of the human race could change. These moments are precious, and fixed. "No one should have that much power," she says, and is greeted by a face very few have seen. The Racnoss Empress saw that face, and feared it. He saw that face once, when his wild twin killed the Daleks for the third and last time, and it scared him to death. That's the face she's seeing now. It is ugly.

"Tough," says the Time Lord.

She steps away. He's no good. He's scary. "You should have left us there." He tries to become smaller, tries to sound rational, tries to ball up all this nervous energy and make himself presentable; he tries to sound reasonable, to justify himself. "Adelaide, I've done this sort of thing before. In small ways. Saved some little people. But never someone as important as you. Oh, I'm good!" The Doctor licks at his chops.

"*Little* people?"

The Doctor gets angry. Angry is so much better than lonely, or hurt, or terrified.

"What, like Mia and Yuri? Who decides they're so unimportant? You?"

Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo: There's the Doctor, that doctors, and the Master, that masters. Last of the Time Lords.

"For a long time now, I thought I was just a survivor, but I'm not. I'm the *winner*." Flying above all that chaos. "That's who I am: The Time Lord Victorious."

Adelaide stares; she can't know what she says next cuts so deeply, comes so close to his hearts, that he has no choice but to entrench: "And there's no one to stop you."

"No," he says, without blinking.

"This is wrong, Doctor. I don't care who you are, the Time Lord Victorious is wrong."

(From Martin Gardner's introduction to his annotated version of GK Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday*: "The only possible way a theist can escape from the atheist's charge -- either God is malevolent or there is no God -- is to view Nature as the back of reality... [Sunday] is Nature, the Universe, with its unalterable God-given, God-upheld laws that seem so obviously indifferent about our welfare... Sunday, like Nature, has a front and back side... From the front he looks like an angel. Nature lavishes on us a thousand gifts that make us happy and grateful to be alive... It can drown us with floods, kills us with tornadoes and diseases. Ultimately it will execute us... [Sunday] is monstrously huge and shapeless. When he stands he seems to fill the sky. His room and clothes are neat, but he is absent-minded and at times his great eyes suddenly go blind.")

The Doctor's eyes are dead. There is nothing human there, for this moment. For this fixed moment, precious and monstrous: "That's for me to decide."

He flips back into his human stance, but it's only a pretense. It makes her shudder. "Now, you'd better get home. Oh, it's all locked up, you've been away. Still, that's easy!" He sonics it, desperately trying to get back to her, forgetting how it's done. How humans behave. How it felt when he wasn't so desperately alone: "All yours!" His voice is threatening and treacly-sweet. He burns, in fire and ice.

"Is there nothing you can't do?" Like time. Like water. He stares her down. "Not anymore," he says in the darkness. Roman runs the robot, the robot runs Roman. It twists his body into new shapes at the Doctor's whim. He treats them like his toys, but without them -- without the Master's Archangels, without the faith that Martha martialed, without Jackson Lake raising his praises far below -- the Good Wolf would never have survived the year that never was.

The Doctor knew, once, that humanity wasn't his plaything; that Earth was not a playground but a new Eden, that held him to her bosom. How did he forget? Where did that knowledge go?

("The man who abhors violence, never carrying a gun. But this is the truth, Doctor. You take ordinary people and you fashion *them* into weapons. Behold your Children of Time, transformed into murderers. I made the Daleks, Doctor. You made this... How many have died in your

name?" Jabe, Controller, Lynda, Sir Robert, Mrs. Moore, Mr. Skinner, Ursula, Bridget, Face of Boe, ChanTho, Astrid, Luke Rattigan, Jenny, River Song, the Hostess. "The Doctor. The man who keeps running, never looking back because he dares not, out of shame... I have shown you yourself.")

And then his family deserted him, scattered to the winds. And his sister, the human Time Lord that could have travelled with him forever, could have kept him human, never running away again: He took her into his arms and he killed her. At her door, Adelaide turns to look back at him: Heading back to the TARDIS, victorious. Above all that chaos and death. Not the last, but the first of something new and terrible. She takes out a flash gun as the bass comes up (the day Rose died, on Bad Wolf Bay; the day he took Doctor-Donna in his arms, and killed her while she wept), and closes the door softly behind her, and she pulls the trigger.

And at the TARDIS door, he whirls in the light of its pulse, and time rights itself. Like water. Adelaide Brooke died 2059, no matter what. History changes around him, and he shivers, gritting his teeth. Time Lord Victorious was wrong. He is paralyzed, suddenly realizing what he has done. The perversity, the pride, the selfishness. The hatefulness of a Lonely God.

The Doctor learns shame. There was someone to stop him, someone to save him, after all.

And on the corner, in the snow, he can see Ood Sigma, watching; he drops to his knees. "I've gone too far. Is this it? My death? Is it time?" Sigma only stares a moment before disappearing, and he finally stands, shaky. The Doctor opens the TARDIS and steps inside, looking around guiltily before he closes the door, swearing something. That he won't die, that he will survive this, that he won't touch time again so roughly. The robot stands in the street, in the snow. Alone. The Doctor stares past her coral works, neither up nor down, and sets his course. All he wanted was for her to love him. The Cloister Bell is ringing.

THE MOTION & THE ACT

By **Jacob Clifton** | Season 4 | Episode 17 | Aired on 12.27.2009

The End Of Time, Part I - Wilfred Mott and the Master return, while the Doctor tries desperately to stay on vacation.

Recaplet: So they've had Lucy Saxon locked up since the Year that Didn't Happen, because "they" are a cult of the Master who have decided to bring him back to life for reasons they're not really that sure about. Luckily, Lucy's in a whole other sleeper group of people who have been working against this, and she contributes to his resurrection party -- which resembles to an eerie degree the opening credits of that early '90s Saturday cartoon version of *Wizard Of Oz* -- something that makes him all kinds of fucked up. So now he's got powers that include having a skeleton-head sometimes, being in everybody's dreams, jumping, and shooting deadly rays of power out of his bipolar fists. Also, looking way hotter than he, or anybody, should with a bleach job.

The Doctor slags off going to see the Ood because he knows he's going to die and doesn't want to talk about it with them because it is a total bummer, but finally he shows up and they tell him a bunch of floofy nonsense that will make sense later, like who all the people are in this episode and how "he" is going to knock four times, because I don't know if you heard me the first ten times, but that's what's going to happen. Also just seeing the back of Donna's head is enough to make me cry, which is also true for the Doctor. So the Doctor runs into Wilf -- who tracks him down because of the Master being in everybody's dreams, and PS it's the end of the world again, and also there's a spooky old lady because on this show there always is -- and the Doctor admits to Wilf how bad he's been fucking up lately, and also how much he wants to see Donna, and how lonely he is, and maybe some other things I didn't catch because I had stuff in my eye.

So newly hot Master Blaster goes around eating people, but it's okay because mostly they're just homeless or people that drive snack trucks. The Doctor chases him around gross trash landfills for about an hour, and every so often they stop so they can rest and make kissy faces at each other and reminisce about how they are totally in love or whatever.

Then the private army of a billionaire named J. Naismith kidnaps him from the Doctor's clutches and use him to work up this "Immortality Gate" alien artifact left over from the child-murdering smoking dregs of Torchwood so that Naismith's daughter can live forever. They don't know how he's totally tricky, which these immortality people never do. So instead, and after eating an entire turkey, he uses the device to make everybody on Earth -- including Donna's mom and boyfriend, and also Barack Obama -- him. That's right, like *Being John Malkovich*. It's Wilf, Donna, and the Doctor against a planet full of Masters in different outfits. None of which are as attractive as the aforementioned bleach job/hoodie combo. Except maybe Master-Obama, that was pretty hot too.

But then for some odd (Ood) reason the Time Lords are yelling in the Galactic Senate all kinds of fascist time nonsense and how it's the end of time and where did they come from with their silly hats and Timothy Dalton is just spitting *everywhere* and the

whole world is John Simm, which sounds great in theory but is pretty scary in real life, so of course just to make things worse, sure enough Donna starts remembering everything at once, so her brain starts exploding and the Doctor is freaking out and it's very thrilling and he's going to die. (*Water Of Mars* recap is due to you shortly, but Christmas and an ill-timed burgling apologize for the delay.) See you NYE!

Recap: "They leave. Because they should, or they find someone else. And some of them... Forget me. I suppose in the end they break my heart."

Matthew Arnold was usually described in terms of contradictions: Both "a man of the world entirely free from worldliness" and "a man of letters without the faintest trace of pedantry," according to Russell. Affecting both foppishness and Olympian grandeur, he read constantly, widely, and deeply. His writings often baffled and annoyed contemporaries with their apparent contradiction between his urbane, even frivolous manner in controversy, and the "high seriousness" of his critical views and the melancholy, almost plaintive note of much of his poetry. TH Warren called him "a voice poking fun in the wilderness." Arnold wrote this about Goethe, in 1850: *Physician of the Iron Age, Goethe has done his pilgrimage. He took the suffering human race, He read each wound, each weakness clear -- And struck his finger on the place, And said -- Thou ailest here, and here.*

TEN: The Love My Own Heart's Missing

"It is said that in the final days of planet Earth, everyone had bad dreams. To the west of the north of that world, the human race did gather in celebration of a pagan rite, to banish the cold and the dark. Each and every one of those people had dreamt of the terrible things to come. But they forgot. Because they must."

This over a shot of the world's moving meridian, and containing a favorite quote of RTD's, from Arnold's poem "Absence." Wilf walks through Christmas on the high street, through all the pageantry and fun. "They forgot their nightmares of fire and war and insanity. They forgot... Except for one." Wilf jerks, breathing, confused; he remembers the Master, laughing madly. He smiles and shakes it off, soon enough. While "God Rest Ye" plays -- "good tidings of comfort and joy!" -- he is suddenly drawn toward a church. Seen from outside time, perhaps it only just changed. Maybe that's why he is drawn there.

Inside, a choir of children is singing. Wilf stands in the back, removing his hat; written on the wall above his head is thanks, for "men who died for their country." Brings to mind Wilf's namesake, and Horace before him: *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. It's the first clue, but it's too

open-ended now to understand: I scatter the words and create myself. I was so focused on Donna last year -- as was the Doctor -- that we didn't really listen to Davros, when he explained that the Children of Time were an army. That for all the Doctor's travels with his women, Maiden and Mother and Crone, he'd never travelled with a man until Jackson Lake. Sure, he had male Companions, but he treated them like children. Sometimes, terribly so.

But if the first three seasons are a journey toward the Doctor's understanding of the feminine, Jackson's arrival on the scene -- as a better man than the Doctor could ever be -- presaged a finale consumed by men. By fathers, and brothers, and sons. By a brother driven mad by harsher fathers, and Eight's rejection of the hardness of madmen. Wilf represents the greatest aspiration of men: A father you can be proud of. He takes the hard truths of Pete's World, the Age of Steel, and combines them with a love and wonder as tender and open as Rose, or Martha, or Donna could ever have shone. The open hand and the closed fist, at once. He is a dare.

Wilf makes his way up the central aisle, drawn to a stained-glass window that is a hidden picture of that wonder: A blue box, familiar to us all, hiding in a corner. He stares up, reminded of a man he loved once. "They call it the Legend of the Blue Box," says a voice, and he turns with a nervous smile. "I've never been in here before. I'm not one for churches," he says oddly: "Too cold."

The woman is all in white, old and beautiful. "This was the site of a convent, back in the 1300s. It's said a demon fell from the sky. Then a man appeared, a man in a blue box." She smiles. "They called him the Sainted Physician. He smote the demon and then disappeared." Wilf wonders about the coincidence; they both know there's no such thing. "Who knows? Perhaps he's coming back," she says, and his heart skips a beat, and then she is gone.

*...This is the curse of life: that not
A nobler calmer train
Of wiser thoughts and feelings blot
Our passions from our brain;
But each day brings its petty dust
Our soon-chok'd souls to fill,
And we forget because we must,
And not because we will...*

The Doctor's been hiding out, ever since his vision of Ood Sigma, on the day of his shame. The day he looked Sunday in the face and realized what he was becoming. He wouldn't call it hiding, but he knows. He arrives in the snows of Oodsphere in a lei and great silly hat, babbling senselessly at Ood Sigma, who has summoned him.

"I didn't exactly come straight here. Had a bit of fun, y'know? Travelled about. Did this and that. Got into trouble, you know me. It was brilliant! I saw the Phosphorous Carousel of the Great Magellan Gestadt! Saved a planet from the Red Carnivorous Maw, named a galaxy Alison, got married -- that was a mistake... Good Queen Bess, and let me tell you, her nickname is no longer..." I'm not sure if he married her (I think he means River Song), but that's about as blue as this show's ever gotten. The Virgin Queen. Not the first he's ruined.

"Anyway. What do you want?" He admits he's been skiving, but after all, the last time they spoke Sigma said his song would be ending soon, and after all who wants that? He locks the TARDIS adorably, with a beeping car key, trying to get a rise out of Sigma, but it's no use. "I locked it, like a car? Like... It's funny. No? Little bit? Blimey, try to make an Ood laugh."

They walk. The Ood city is beautiful in the snow; he nudges Sigma appreciatively but gets scared when he learns it's only been a hundred years since they were freed. "All of this is way too fast. Not just the city, I mean your ability to call me, reaching all the way back to the 21st century. Something's accelerating your species way beyond normal." That something is need. "The Mind of the Ood is troubled. Every night, we have bad dreams."

Sigma takes him down into the caves of the Elders, where an oracle takes the smoke and spins an astrolabe or orrery as the rest of the circle moans. "Returning, returning, returning, it is slowly returning. Through the dark and the fire and the blood, always returning, returning to this world. It is returning, and he is returning, and they are returning. But too late, too late, far too late, he is come..." It's Ood wordplay, but what it means is buffalo. The Last of the Time Lords: He, and they, and you are returning. The Doctor sits with the Elders, to share the Dreaming. To join with them, in their song.

The first thing he sees is the Master, laughing, just as in Wilf's vision. The sound he heard, well in the back, far as drums, when he ruined Adelaide. "He comes to us. Every night. I think all the peoples of the universe dream of him now..." The Doctor swears he's dead, but they're not done. "Join us. Events are taking shape. So many years ago, and yet changing the now. There is a man..." The Doctor steels himself for it this time, but it's Wilf: "So scared." The Doctor freaks out, first for Wilf and then inevitably for Donna. "You should not have delayed, for the lines of convergence are being drawn across the Earth. Even now the king is in his counting house," they say, showing him the Naismiths, whom the

Doctor doesn't yet recognize.

"And there is another. The most lonely of all, lost and forgotten." Lucy Saxon shivers in a cell, sobbing. The Ood ask after her, and the Doctor is compassionate in explanation: "It wasn't her fault, she was... The Master, he's a Time Lord, like me. The Master took the name of Saxon. He married a human, a woman called Lucy, and he corrupted her. She stood at his side while he conquered the Earth." He swears that year never happened. He wishes it never had. But Lucy Saxon remembered.

"I held him in my arms," the Doctor cries. "I burnt his body! The Master is dead!" But there was more: A strange woman, taking up a ring from the cooling coals, with red nails and white hair. Like the Empress, the Haemovore, the Carrionite Witches: The spooky old witch that hides in the shadows, part of every tale just like the errant nutter that takes you up into the sky. The Doctor tries to run away, to stop it happening, but the Elder is not finished: "Something more is happening, Doctor. The Master is part of a greater design. Because a shadow is falling over creation. Something vast is stirring in the dark." Their eyes burn red. The schism is untempered because it remains broken, a red crack in the world.

"The Ood have gained this power to see through time because time is bleeding. Shapes of things once lost are moving through the veil. And these events from years ago threaten to destroy this future, and the present, and the past. The darkness heralds only one thing. The end of time itself."

The Master laughs again, his madness chasing the Doctor out of that cave and into the snow, under the sun, all alone: "Events that have happened are happening now." The Elder breathes the smoke of revelation. As the Doctor makes his way back to the TARDIS, frantic, a hundred years ago Lucy Saxon is being led down a corridor, into a strange and dark ceremonial room. A woman -- that spooky old lady, Miss Trefusis, standing strong behind her -- explains to her prisoner that she's finally been able to replace Lucy's governor. Finally engineered the murder of her previous captor.

"You kept your silence well, Mrs. Saxon. Your trial was held in secret, with no jury, so no one knows who Harold Saxon was. Where he came from. Why you killed him." They make Lucy kneel; they drop her to her knees once again. "There are those of us who never lost faith. And in his wisdom, Harold Saxon prepared for this moment: He knew that he might die, and he made us ready. Tonight, Mrs. Saxon... He returns!" And

somewhere, the Master laughs, and Lucy screams, as they place the ring upon an altar.

As Wilf watches the storm, at home with Sylvia and Donna, the strange woman appears again.

It didn't count until she could see it for what it was. See God beneath every face and every detail and every part of the world and the universe. The sun and the moon. And eventually back down to Earth. But even still, she never thought it would end. It doesn't. We forget because we must.

"As it was written in the Secret Books of Saxon, these are the Potions of Life..." They combine their magic potions and the ring, everything, while Lucy screams in horror. Finally, they wipe her mouth: Like Donna and her coffee every morning, she became his vessel without ever knowing it. "You were Saxon's wife. You bore his imprint. That's all we needed, the final biometrical signature..." It's a kiss, on a napkin; they drop it into the mortar and the spell begins: Lightning, and a mad vortex above their heads. The ring, the potions, and the kiss. Everything reversed. The women of the cult begin to drop like flies, their souls taken up into the oncoming storm like so many archangel voices. They call on him, by his true name, and he appears, naked and beautiful, whirling above them.

"Never. Never. Never. Never. Never dying. Never dying! Never dying! Never dying! Never dying!"

The TARDIS goes mad on her way to stop him, shooting sparks and dropping wires. The Master laughs, and holds out his arms to his wife. "Did the widow's kiss bring me back to life?" He watches the cult fall, dying one by one, and laughs down at poor Lucy: "They're just the first. The whole stupid stinking human disgrace can fall into the pit." The drums return, louder than ever before, as he clutches at his head. "Oh, I have missed them!" he laughs. Like Donna was, once: Lonely and in love with what makes him lonely, offering only clemency without redemption. Lucy stands up, suddenly, smiling.

"But no one knew you better than I did. I knew you'd come back. And all this time, your disciples have prepared -- but so have we!" One of her guards hands her a tiny vial. "The Secret Books of Saxon spoke of the Potions of Life. And I was never that bright, but my family had contacts, people who were clever enough to calculate the opposite." As he screams, she uncorks the little bottle, and hurls the mess into the cauldron. "Till death do us part, Harry!" Begging for obedience, he explodes in the light.

By the time the Doctor arrives at the prison, it's empty and burnt out, like a field of war.

Next morning, Joshua Naismith stares at the fires on his computer, summoning someone he calls "darling" to his side and showing her the wreckage. In one split-second of the footage, a man runs wild, darting across the screen like a feral thing. "That would be such a Christmas present!" his partner gasps, just as did Wilf when he saw the blue box. "You just leave it to Daddy," Naismith laughs, and calls out to their staff. In the great room, a giant alien gate begins to spark. "Christmas is cancelled. Prepare the Gate!" Two scientists work, sneaking looks at each other. Once we said that to refer to the Companions as children -- as the Master called his monsters children, as Davros called the Daleks and Companions both -- was a perversion. I don't think it's a mistake that Joshua Naismith's relationship to Abigail is confusing at first. The greatest perversion on this show, in the last five years, has been to seek the end of time. Lazarus, Doctor Yana, Cassandra: All of them wanted to end time, to reach immortality. We'll never really get to know the Naismiths, but their broad strokes fill in the thematic links: They're worse than even Torchwood One. They fight the future.

Wilf whistles, sneaking out of the house with cute reindeer antlers on his head, calling out his vague goodbyes. Once out of the house, he summons a old folks' shuttle bus full of his compatriots, dancing down the lane toward it, overjoyed for an outing, determined to find the Doctor and save the world from these bad dreams. He gives them a dossier and describes the Doctor -- "Modern sort of hair, all sticky-uppy" -- although he refuses to give them any more details than necessary. Minnie the Menace (the dotty mother on *Absolutely Fabulous*, for Americans) jokes about getting locked in a police box in 1962, and is clearly their group's sexual mascot, which is awesome. They do a lot of old-folks things like saying "wa-hey!" and using words like "skiffle," and finally Minnie puts a name to their network: The Silver Cloak. Distributed human effort has been a theme of this show for a long time, too. It's the only way to combat the power and the strangeness of the universe: **You start over there, and I'll start over here. Less magic, more problem solving.** An Archangel Network, but a LINDA too. "Answer me this. Have you been having bad dreams? All of you?" Even the driver has. "Dreams you can't remember? Yeah, well, that's why we need him. We need the Doctor. More than ever."

A couple of homeless guys order some kind of gross British food from a wagon on the edge of a wasteland, brands burning in barrels, and the

elder tells the younger -- fathers and sons, everywhere you look -- about how Obama's giving a speech on Christmas about ending the recession. That'll age well. The Master appears in the background, brooding in a hoodie, as they chat cheerfully with the woman and walk away with their food. When they are gone, the Master appears and grins horribly into her smiling face. He whips off his hoodie, growling: "I am so hungry!" She stares, he laughs, she dies in some horrible fashion.

"They're saying that the President's got this grand plan. He's going to save the world with some big financial scheme." They chat about that, about hope and how crazy America must look to everybody else even today, and the Master lands on a box from out of the sky, stuffing himself with his pie. They're friendly but wary, and he very quickly proves to be totally nuts. "Want cheese and chips and meat and gravy and cream and beer and pork and beef and fat and great big chunks of hot wet red..." The elder tramp realizes they need to bounce, but not before Ginger, the younger, notes that the Master looks like Saxon: "The one that went mad." He laughs, friendly and curious, and the Master predictably goes batshit on a slow burn.

"Isn't that funny? Isn't that just the best thing of all? The Master of disguise, stuck looking like the old Prime Minister. I can't hide anywhere! He can see me, he can smell me... Can't let him smell me! Doctor, Doctor, shocker stopped-her, got to stop the smell! The stink, the filthy, filthy stink!" He wipes crazily at himself as the elder suggests that Ginger get a fucking move on. "Because it's funny! Don't you see? Look at me! I'm splitting my sides. I am hilarious!" His face becomes a skull, for a moment, with an electric buzz, like a raging beast. "I am the funniest thing! In the whole wide world!" They run, while he laughs; when they reach the van Sarah's gone: They are all smoking skeletons. The end of time. He jumps through the air, like the Incredible Hulk, hundreds of feet up, and lands on them, skeleton mouth first.

The Master wanders the wasteland, staring around, sniffing something. He throws back his hood; the Doctor can smell him, in return. The Master is overjoyed, manic, and begins to beat upon a metal barrel with a huge pipe. Guess how many times?

The Doctor finally locates him, drawn by the drumbeats, and they chase each other for so long they end up with their places reversed. The Doctor stares up at him, lovingly and terrified, and finally the Master explodes into space again, landing and running; he laughs, buzzing into a death's-head once again, and the Doctor begs to let him help. The Master

rolls his eyes, charmingly, and sets off again. "You're burning up your own life force!"

The Doctor lied right to Donna's face when asked if he ever had a brother: He said he didn't. Not anymore.

NINE: A Kiss Wilf intercepts the Doctor, relieved and excited to see him, nearly weeping with joy. The Doctor is torn, between tracking down the Master and letting himself be happy to see Wilf. Finally he gives in, as the Silver Cloak tells him how exactly they triangulated his location, and before he can do anything they've clustered around him, touching and grinning. One old queen snaps a picture of him with Minnie as she grabs his ass. The Master is long gone.

Later the bus drops the Doctor and Wilf at a pub -- Minnie blows him a kiss, outrageously -- and Wilf leads him inside, refusing to tell the Doctor what's so special about it. At the table, Wilf reminisces with the Doctor about their good times -- the Atmos system, the Stolen Earth, the paint gun -- and finally, through a fake laugh, admits he's terrified. He admits seeing the terrified face, in his dreams, and remembering them. The Doctor stares at him, puzzled, wondering how Wilf's always been able to find him so quickly, and shakes his head: "We keep on meeting, Wilf. Over and over again. Like something's still connecting us." Wilf wonders if it's important, if he's important, but the Doctor doesn't know. All he knows is that he's lonely.

And so, surprising himself, he gives it up suddenly: "I'm going to die."

Wilf says he's going to kick one day too -- "Don't you dare," the Doctor snaps lovingly -- and watches his Doctor, grown sad and alone. "I was told 'He will knock four times.' That was the prophecy. Knock four times, and then..."

Wilf points out about Time Lord regeneration and how the Doctor will just change. This is not exactly the problem. "I can still die. If I'm killed before regeneration, then I'm dead." But that's not it either. He says the real part, the worst part: "Even then. Even if I change, it feels like dying. Everything I am dies. Some new man goes sauntering away," he grits bitterly, "And I'm dead." Wilf weeps. I don't know why the Boomers lost this thing, this strong and complex thing our grandfathers had, where they knew love didn't make you weak. Not all of them did, my dad's a **unicorn** for sure, but I know their fathers had it more than ours did. And it is necessary now. It's what the Doctor needs to see, to make sense of the untempered schism in us all.

He cracked open his chest and let himself take chances and risk oblivion in ways he never had before. She reached up to Heaven and he reached down to Earth, and where they touched, it was magic.

The Doctor spots Donna out the window, on the street, and Wilf immediately starts apologizing. "I had to! Look, can't you make her better?" The Doctor begs him to stop, cut it out, quit it, because this is another version of the Last Temptation, but one that tests the Steel boundaries far enough that not even on the Doctor's most manic day could he go back over that line. And of course, just like the Doctor, all you want is for it to work out, for Donna to get some back. And I think that this throws off the whole proceeding, because Donna is so fucking amazing that obviously she should be the star of the show and it should be called *Donna Who*, and clearly seeing her in Part One means that in Part Two she is going to save the day in a variety of outfits.

Which pretty much, I realized, misses the point of her story, which is that eventually the Doctor had to lose someone, *really* lose someone, *Adric* lose someone, in order for this year to happen at all. He had to lose Donna to love Jackson Lake, he had to lose Donna to dump Lady Christina, he had to lose Donna to abuse Adelaide, and he had to hurt Adelaide to realize what he was becoming. He had to come around to identifying *with* those who keep the line, instead of always coming up against it like with Rose. He had to stop hating and fearing the Steel Age, see its power in himself, and see his own potential for taking it too far. That's what masculinity *is*, and that's what this story is about, and you can't finish the Rose/Martha story until you raise the stakes with a Donna: That is how he was finally broken. And then as far as Donna: We already know she'll be okay, because *Turn Left*. She proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that it doesn't take the Doctor to make her a hero.

"No, but you're so clever! Can't you bring her memory back? Just go to her now, go on, just run across the street, go up and say hello!" Wilf has the option of being soft because they are his children, he can hope against the Steel Age. But it's important too that he mentioned cleverness, because that's exactly the issue, and the Doctor knows that. Cleverness without love is not humanity, and neither is love without cleverness, and either way that's what going to Donna would be now. "If she ever remembers me, her mind will burn, and she will die." We forget because we must.

Outside, they can hear Donna yelling at the metermaid, adorably, and they laugh about how wonderful she is -- how much of her was always

there. She's joined by her fiancé, Shaun Temple, and the Doctor is shocked that she'll be having yet another wedding -- and that her name will be "Noble-Temple." Wilf shakes his head and says it's going to be "Temple-Noble," which is scarcely better. Either way, the point is clear. She's the household goddess of temples across time. She is stronger than she knows. "Is she happy? Is he nice?" Shaun's sweet enough -- a bit of a dreamer, of course -- and on minimum wage. "She's earning tuppence, so all they can afford is a tiny little flat. And then sometimes I see this look on her face, like she's so sad. But she can't remember why." She's got him. She's making do. As are we all.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets, But often, in the din of strife, There rises an unspeakable desire After the knowledge of our buried life; A thirst to spend our fire and restless force In tracking out our true, original course; A longing to inquire Into the mystery of this heart which beats So wild, so deep in us, to know Whence our lives come and where they go.

"How about you?" Wilf asks. "Who've you got, now?" He starts off brave -- "no one, traveling alone" -- but immediately goes dark and breaks down in front of Wilf, ashamed. "...I thought it was better. But I did some things, it went wrong. I need..." He begins to weep, and Wilf reaches out, horrified and compassionate, deadly worried for him. "Merry Christmas," the Doctor laughs, manning up and wiping his tears away; Wilf is weeping too. "But don't you see? You need her, Doctor. I mean, look, wouldn't she make you laugh again? Good old Donna?" The car pulls away, as the Doctor cries.

Elton's sitting in front of the camera again on the video diary, but not looking at it. He speaks for many daughters at once: "We forget because we must."

The Doctor nods, without speaking; his words would betray him. *Wouldn't she make you laugh again?*

EIGHT: A Wish The Master glories in his wasteland, still eating, gnawing at bones in rat's alley: "And so it came to pass that the players took their final places, making ready the events that were to come. The madman sat in his empire of dust and ashes, little knowing of the glory he would achieve, while his savior looked upon the wilderness, in the hope of changing his inevitable fate."

The Naismiths clink champagne, grinning greedily at their Gate, as the sneaky scientists make their plans: "Far away, the idiots and fools dreamt

of a shining new future. A future now doomed to never happen. As Earth rolled onwards into night, the people of that world did sleep, and shiver, somehow knowing that dawn would bring only one thing."

"The final day," says Rassilon -- smiling, beautiful -- as the world rolls into night.

The Master looks up, finally, with the Doctor staring at him, worried. Sparks light the Master's hands as the Doctor comes closer, and soon he's raining down fire and blasts on the Doctor, who never stops moving. He rubs his sparking palms together, closing an arc, shooting the blasts directly into the Doctor's chest, and still he does not stop. The Master is all he has. He is surrounded by fire.

Finally the Master relents, and when the Doctor drops he grabs him, and holds him close a moment before dropping him to the earth. He sits back, in the wasteland. "I had estates. Do you remember my father's land, back home? Pastures of red grass, stretching far across the slopes of Mount Perdition. We used to run across those fields all day, calling up at the sky... Look at us now."

"All that eloquence," the Doctor nods. "But how many people have you killed?" The Master is nearly offended, offering almost in explanation: "I am *so hungry*." The Doctor explains how his resurrection must have gone wrong, and how he's dying now. The Master ignores him. Most of their conversations are like this, doctor to madman, parallel and never meeting. "And that human Christmas out there! They eat so much! All that roasting meat. Cakes and red wine hot fat blood food..." The Doctor stares, sadly, coughing as he recovers. Binary binary binary.

"Pots plates of meat and flesh and grease and juice and baking burnt sticky hot skin hot it's so hot!" The Doctor begs him to stop, but he can't. "Sliced sliced sliced it's mine it's mine it's mine to eat and eat and eat!" The Doctor begs him to stop, but he can't. "And feast and eat and eat and eat and eat!" He holds his head, going mad. The Doctor offers to contract his help, instead, and the Master laughs at his cheek. "There's more at work tonight than you and me." The Master's never believed that. The Doctor's been hardpressed to remember it, sometimes. "I've been told something is returning," the Doctor says, and the Master camps it up: "And here I am!" The Doctor shakes his head: "No, it was something more." The Master shivers: "But it *hurts!*"

("The sun and the moon, the day and night. But why do they hurt?")

"I was told the end of time," the Doctor begins to explain, but the Master's moved on: "It hurts, Doctor, the noise... The noise in my head, Doctor, one two three four one two three four. Stronger than ever before!" The Doctor stares, now, at this new information. "Can't you hear it?" the Master begs, and the Doctor's so sorry; he screams at him now, to listen. Just to listen. The madness of the Master is that he believes he is alone. "Every minute, every second, every beat of my hearts, there it is! Calling to me. Please, listen." The Doctor shakes his head, sadly, and finally the Master grabs at him, shoving his head to his temple angrily. *Listen.*

And he hears it, finally. After all this time, the drums. The Doctor shudders, but the Master's flipped again, and leaps into the air, screaming. "It's real!" The chase begins again. "All these years, you thought I was mad. King of the wasteland!" That was all he wanted to be. Earth is just a playground, he never cared about humanity. King of a dry wasteland was all he could imagine for himself. "But something is calling me, Doctor! What is it what is it what is it?" When the helicopters suddenly arrive and the men comes down on their ropes, the Master raises his face to their spotlights like an annunciation, and when they take him up into the sky, they are like dark angels. They shoot, downing the Doctor just long enough to get away, and then he is alone again.

(Lazarus mentions "splitting the atom" -- as though you can divide anyone into two selves, two bodies, one good and one bad, one Doctor and one Master. As though when we look in a mirror, no matter how dark or how warped, we're seeing somebody else. As though one heart beating could stop another. Between the person you'd like to be, and the worst that you're capable of, falls the shadow. Or is it just a very large vase?)

Remember us -- if at all -- not as lost Violent souls, but only As the hollow men... Between the idea And the reality Between the motion And the act Falls the Shadow.

While Donna makes Christmas Morning margaritas -- with oranges, instead of lemons -- Wilf opens his present: *Fighting The Future*, by Joshua Naismith. Weird gift. Sylvia preens over her sweater from Donna -- who's making tuppence -- and asks altogether more politely than she used to whether Donna saved the receipt. They rag on Wilf for grumping around all morning, and Donna asks him how he likes his present. He just wants to know why she got it for him. "I dunno, I just saw it in the shop and thought of you. It just felt like the sort of thing you should have..." She fugues out a moment, and then comes back to when Sylvia laughs

over a sexy Santa card from Charlie Morton. "Isn't that rude?" They laugh, as he stares at the book.

From the Journal Of Impossible Things: *Maius intra qua extra*. "What is inside is greater than what is outside."

A certain hottie, Mr. Danes, takes the tape off the Master's mouth at Naismith's request. He begs for food, and Joshua summons food for him as he explains that his daughter Abigail is the one who'd noticed the rumors about the return of Harold Saxon, his disciples and foretold return. "It's the sort of thing she finds rather thrilling," Naismith says, as she and the Master stare weirdly at each other. "The very man we need, and he's here!" she claps, as the Master tastes the air. And isn't that a dainty dish to set before the king?

Look back, not forward. Don't investigate the information. If it feels good, use it. If it's entertaining, swallow it. Let it brush up against the angles of your life until you can't remember what it was like without it: It's the recipe for conquest.

Shaun arrives at Wilf's house, talking about Obama and the recession, and everyone laughs as he unloads his presents, while Wilf tries to get everybody together to listen to the Queen's speech. Shaun kisses him, and he giggles and shoves him away again. "Will you behave? Honestly! All right now, she's on. She's on, it's our sovereign." He salutes, but it's another royal who appears on the screen: His mysterious Time Lady, whom only he can see.

"Events are moving, Wilfred. Faster than we thought. Only you can see, only you stand at the heart of coincidence." She's right: Donna just makes a joke about the Queen's apparel and goes back to her family, in the kitchen. Wilf asks again what's so important about him, but he won't really know for a good, bad time yet. "You're an old soldier, sir. Only you were too late. The war was won and passed you by." Wilf's offended: he did his duty. "You never killed a man," she notes, and he shudders, disgusted: "No, I did not, no. Don't say that like it's shameful!" She nods. "The time will come when you must take arms." She warns him not to tell the Doctor, that his life could still be saved as long as Wilf doesn't tell, and vanishes, replaced by the Queen.

Later, he comes away from the laughter of his family and retrieves a gun from beneath a bed upstairs, wrapped in a rag. The Doctor's downstairs, hiding behind the TARDIS on the street, and Wilf goes out to meet him: He says the Master's missing, but he can still smell him on Earth. He asks

Wilf again why he's the only thing connecting all these disparate stories together, and asks if he can think of anything -- like, for example, the mysterious lady -- but Wilf says no. Well, there's one thing: The random book that Donna got him, that pulls at the threads of coincidence, that sent her off into a reverie. The Doctor recognizes Naismith's face from the cover of the book, and grins: "It's all part of the convergence, maybe touching Donna's subconscious. Oh, she's still fighting for us, even now! The Doctor-Donna." Still better at this than him, dead or not.

Sylvia appears, and spotting the Doctor starts yelling. She remembers to tell him Merry Christmas before telling him to GTFO -- which is very cute, and a good reminder about how the Doctor already got Sylvia to lay off Donna and mind her manners, another gift he gave her; the actress really does work to make the different versions of Sylvia make sense -- and they all three agree one more time that Donna's the thing and that the Doctor needs to disappear. Donna comes looking for them, since now everybody's outside, and roams the house yelling for them; Wilf takes the opportunity to head for the TARDIS with the Doctor, which pisses Sylvia off, but before she can scream them to death, they're gone, and Donna appears: "Are you shouting at thin air?" she asks, adorably, and Sylvia nods awesomely: "Yes? Possibly. Yes."

Wilf stares around the TARDIS long enough for them to have the usual Companion meet-cute about how crazy big the TARDIS is, inside, and welcome aboard, and all that ritual. He asks if they can't just take the TARDIS back to yesterday and catch the madman, but the Doctor explains about how you can't move around in your own timeline -- "I have to stay relative to the Master within the causal nexus, understand?" -- and they're off.

At the Naismith mansion, they've got the Master on a collar and leash, in a straight jacket. They finally light up the giant alien tech, which is clearly not from Earth. When Naismith points out that neither is the Master, the two sketchy scientists stare at each other, and they run off to freak out about him downstairs, releasing the shimmers that make them look human and revealing themselves to be spiky and green and annoying. Verdict: "What if this visitor is some sort of genius? We're hijacking this project, maybe we can use him, too. Harold Saxon, or whatever he is, might be exactly what we need." I guarantee this is not the case, but to be honest I hate the Vinvocci more than I hated the Slitheen, so I could care less.

The Gate was found inside a spaceship, buried at the foot of Mount

Snowdon, and taken by Torchwood One and subsequently "acquired" by Naismith, after the whole Void thing. The Master likes the cut of Joshua's jib, but any bonding that might occur as a result is undercut by the Master noting also that he would taste delicious. The Master's turkey is delivered and he pounds the whole thing, which is totally disgusting, and then Naismith explains the Nuclear Bolt. And we're using "explains" rather loosely here: Basically, it's some kind of two-cell plastic unit that houses the power supply of the Gate. Somebody has to monitor the energy feedback 24/7, so it doesn't explode or vent, which means when one door locks the other one unlocks. "The power feeds through to the Gate, where it encourages some sort of cellular regeneration." He shows the Master a lady whose arm used to be burnt and now isn't. Naismith then explains that he wants the Master to fix it up entirely and then they can use it to make his daughter immortal. Apropos of nothing, the little weirdo goes, "Abigail. It means Bringer of Joy." I fuckin' hate the Naismiths.

The TARDIS appears on the estate, and the Master can of course immediately smell him, so he gets to work. Meanwhile, Wilf's mind is blown -- in a good way -- by how they went from a place to a place, and then follows the Doctor out into the building. He sets the TARDIS one second out of sync so the Master can't get his skeleton-hands on her, and they sneak past the Naismith's guards, sonic a tiny door, and then back themselves into it, which is very cute. Meanwhile, the annoying scientists are marveling at the Master's results, like so: "The shatterthreads have harmonized! The fiberlinks have densified! The multiple overshots have triplicated!" The Doctor appears to them, removing their shimmers immediately, and -- while upstairs they lock the Master back up again, to his disappointment -- freaks out on the scientist jerks trying to figure out the Master's new little game he's playing.

So while Naismith at length bullshits about how he's overruled the Master and will second-guess him and whatever, the stupid Vinvocci explain that they're only there to salvage the Gate. As for what it does? It's a medical device that repairs the body. A Doctor Gate, if you will. But the Doctor knows there's more to it than that, and finally Wilf asks the major question, which is why it's so big if it's just a sickbed. "It mends whole planets," the awful woman scientist says. "It transmits the medical template across the entire population." And girl, you know that's when the glasses come off and the Doctor starts running.

Meanwhile Naismith is just making no sense at all, yelling at the Master about Obama and how it's proof that the human race can mend its own

problems, which seems like a weird point to try and score given he's the guy that just mended your problems for you, but whatever. There's a long lead-up where the President takes to the podium in a pretty explosion of flashbulbs and lens flares, and the doctor finally gets to the Gate, where he immediately starts yelling at everybody. The Master laughs at all the commotion, shucks the straitjacket, and Hulk-jumps into the Gate, and then before you know it he's turned the entire globe into more of him. The President, Sylvia and Shaun, everybody. The only humans left are Donna, because of her Time Lord DNA, and Wilf, because he's standing in that Nuclear Lockdown thing when it hits. Donna's brain starts melting as she remembers things -- the Wasp, the Rachnoss -- and everywhere on earth the Master looks back at you.

"The human race was always your favorite, Doctor, but now there is no human race! There is only the Master Race!" Boo. All the six billion Masters laugh and point at everybody else; down in the street one of them throws a hat, and another one mysteriously catches it. That was pretty awesome.

SEVEN: A Secret, Never To Be Told"This is perfection. I have created Heaven on Earth." Only a fake bastard God could think that was beautiful.

If the Master is the Doctor's cruelest and most Old Testament desires, bookend him with Donna: The lonely angel human half of the Doctor. The Donna (The Noble?) would've beat the shit out of Saxon.

There are two kinds of faith: stupid and smart. There's the kind of faith that keeps you in the rat race, heading for this Utopia on the highway of life, giving up all personal determination, all free will, because somebody told you one time that it's going to get awesome as long as you don't go too low, don't reach too high, don't talk too much, don't ask questions, don't disobey.

"And so it came to pass, on Christmas Day, that the human race did cease to exist. But even then, the Master had no concept of his greater role in events. For this was far more than humanity's end. This day was the day upon which the whole of creation would change forever. This was the day the Time Lords returned."

Saturn rules the sphere of the Emperor, Trump IV, God the Father, the God of Peter's World, of hard truths and impossible decisions, rules and regulations; who must choose between the open hand and the closed fist, between Chesed and Gevurah, mercy and judgment, Doctor and Master.

Rassilon stands before the Panopticon, staff held high. Behind him stand two Time Lords, backs straight, and two Time Ladies, with their hands over their eyes. And all the Time Lords screaming:

"For Gallifrey! For victory! For the end of time itself!"

I don't know how Pete's World looks to somebody who was born there. That's my secret weapon, but also my weakness. We got glimpses of it: Davros and Cybus showed us how to thrive there. The little boy's father in "Idiot's Lantern" showed us how dangerous it was; Victoria and Mercy Rattigan showed what it can do to you. Pete Tyler, like Wilf is doing now, showed us how to survive it without turning to stone. But the rest of us -- maybe all of us, maybe the real lie of the Age of Steel is that anybody feels comfortable there -- we travel with women. We live in Sunnydale, where there are no fathers. No fixed points, no hard choices. No shooting guns. No empires. Pete's World is what happens when the fathers come back to Sunnydale. And that's the story here: Learning to travel both without losing either.

At the end of *Queer As Folk*, I'm not ruining anything, but the leads -- having broken every rule; gender and sex and family and marriage and social behavior and criminal law -- they have that Matrix moment where they realize that no matter how many times you break out of the jail, there's another jail. You have to keep going, you have to keep making the world get bigger, cage after cage after cage, because grace is a wave that never breaks. So they go to America, Arizona, where they act like superheroes with guns, and it's a little scary and more than a bit ugly. Which is to say, in this body of work, homosexuality is a metaphor -- on an equal plane with Baxter's death and the TARDIS, meaning it's real and you cannot take away the concrete power of it even as it's working as a metaphor at the same time -- for the experience of freedom. Of realizing that you are already free.

ARMS & THE BOY

By **Jacob Clifton** | Season 4 | Episode 18 | Aired on 01.02.2010

The End Of Time, Part II - The Master calls out Gallifrey for their crimes, and the Doctor says goodbye.

Recaplet: Okay, so nothing that happened last week actually mattered. The Immortality Gate that was explained by literally less than one line of dialogue from the cartoonishly unmotivated Naismiths, the drums, the Cult of the Secret Book of Harold Saxon, and the Opposing Cult of the Secret Death Potions of Lucy Saxon, the Master Race, Donna Noble's entire life and story... None of them actually have anything to do with anything. They were just there to pad out the Christmas Special. Which, considering you're looking at nearly three hours -- which includes ten minutes each of running around in a quarry and running around a mansion with cactus people, plus an unending laser battle in space for no reason at all -- is particularly hard to justify.

But then, nothing in this one really matters all that much either. There's a lot of that back-and-forth flirting and fighting between the Doctor and the Master, but it becomes immediately clear that there's only one Master that actually matters, so the whole concept of Planet Master just sort of falls flat immediately. Then Donna reacts to her situation by exploding with light and putting some Masters to sleep, a gift from the Doctor for his BFF. Then the Master pulls it together for a few minutes so he can hang out with the Doctor and Wilf and be a normal person -- but just long enough to explain about the fucking drums one more time.

Then the Doctor gives him the full-court press as far as Companion-wooing, basically saying he wants to show the Master the whole of the universe and make out all the time. The Master is totes mcgoats about this plan, but then realizes for no real reason that the neverending drums are a big deal, or something, and he's not actually crazy. Which, though, he is. But what he doesn't know is that actually the drums are a thing that creepy Rassilon (Tim Dalton) and the Time Lords figure out inside the Timelock to make the Master be able to hear them or whatever. Also, they throw a diamond at a hologram picture of Earth that somehow lands in the yard of that stupid house of the Naismiths on the real Earth. That actually happens. The Masters run around a long time and realize that this diamond will make the Immortality Gate bring the Time Lords to Earth, so they do, and it doesn't make any goddamn sense at all and they keep saying egregious shit like, "The sound! Is tangible!" and "The star! Is a diamond! Is a star!"

Meanwhile Wilf and the Doctor run around the mansion for awhile with those obnoxious cactus people, and then go to their obnoxious cactus space ship so that Wilf can wander around like an old drunk and talk to that mysterious lady some more, while the Doctor feels a bunch of feelings. Then Wilf tries to get the Doctor to take his gun so he can kill the Master, but the Doctor is not feeling that, so then Wilf sincerely freaks out about how much he loves the Doctor, and it's moving. Right up until the fiftieth time the music starts swooning about how great Wilf is, and how real their love for each other is, and aren't Grandpas sweet, and don't you miss Grandpa at Christmas, and whatever hacky manipulative bullshit they can do for you in case having feelings is an area you're weak in.

The Master finally has to actually explain to the Doctor about the diamond and the drums and the Timelock and whatever total bullshit, and the Doctor reverses his entire belief system because the Master can't be allowed to stop his original genocide of their people. Because war made them crazy and act like Daleks, which the Master doesn't know about, because he wasn't there. Rassilon shows up with those four other Lords, thanks to the Master, and quickly turns all of Earth back to being normal people. The Master feels especially foolish at this point because he just explained how he was going to take over the Time Lord bodies too. Then he tries to be on their side, but it's hard, because all the formerly Master humans are now staring up at the sky, where Gallifrey has appeared. Which, by the way, also makes no sense because Gallifrey is shitty and on fire and Earth was supposed to be their salvation, but whatever. And no, I'm not doing a bad job of explaining it. It really is this retarded.

So the Doctor and the Master and Rassilon yell at each other for a million years. They also shoot rays of power. And the Master is still sometimes a skull-face. Meanwhile, remember that complicated nuclear device last week that served no actual purpose, where one person has to always be in there or else the other door won't open? Yeah, Wilf has wandered his ass right in there.

So big faceoff, and the Doctor saves the Master, and the Master saves the Doctor, and the mysterious Lady has no explanation at all for herself, and Donna remembers nothing about anything once again, and everybody laughs at her, and then the Time Lords go back to hell, and the Master *literally just disappears with no explanation whatsoever*, and then the Doctor stomps around for a year or two about how lame it is to die for somebody as old and weird as Wilf, and finally dies to save Wilf, which causes yet more screaming from the old guy. Then the Doctor groans and rolls around in bright red light for an hour or so, and then it turns out he's fine.

Except really he's not, he is regenerating. Only it's one of those regenerations that takes a half hour where he gets to visit everybody he ever met in his entire life and stare at them creepily until they cry. He gives Donna a lottery ticket, Mickey and Martha are married for the same unfortunate reason Storm's the Queen of Wakanda, he hands over Midshipman Frame's unquestionably perfect ass to Captain Jack, and finally Wilf is actually blowing him kisses at this point and saluting whenever he cries at the Doctor, which is literally constantly, and he goes to see Rose in 2005 which is sort of awesome, and then the Doctor finally, finally dies, and turns into... Jailbait. Excellent.

Recap: For rigorous teachers seized my youth, And purged its faith, and trimm'd its fire, Show'd me the high white star of Truth, There bade me gaze, and there aspire.-- The Grande Chartreuse (1855)

SIX: Hell

On once-beautiful Gallifrey there is a bottle city, fire and downed spaceships everywhere. Within, they walk across a bridge in a falling-down place, entering through a huge and lovely broken gate. Two stand guard outside the room: President Rassilon stands at the head; the mad Visionary sits at the foot. Six in total. Six for Hell.

The Visionary scribbles in the last moments of the Time War. The Doctor has disappeared, but they know his intention: "He still possesses the Moment," a Time Lady warns, "And he'll use it, to destroy Daleks and Time Lords alike." The Visionary confirms it: "Ending burning falling all of it falling the black and pitch and screaming fire, so burning..." All the prophecies agree: This is the end of the Time War. Gallifrey falls, and the Time Lords die, today. At the Doctor's hand.

"Perhaps it's time," says the Time Lady. "This is only the furthest edge of the Time War. But at its heart, millions die every second. Lost in bloodlust and insanity." The mad Visionary, the old hag, letters and symbols and time written over her body in an endless black flood, stops to listen. "With Time itself resurrecting them, to find new ways of dying, over and over again, a travesty of life." She is proud; there are tears in her throat. "Isn't it better to end it, at last?" Rassilon stands, thanks her for her opinion, and vaporizes her where she sits. His spittle and his madness. "I will not die! Do you hear me? A billion years of Time Lord history riding on our backs? I will not let this perish. I will not!"

The petty fears of empire. Another man speaks, as the Visionary scrabbles in time. "There is one part of the prophecy, my Lord. Forgive me... I'm sorry, it's rather difficult to decipher, but..." He points at the gorgeous whorls of her writing, the intertwined and timeless madness. The out-clause speaks of two survivors, two children of Gallifrey, beyond the Final Day. They are unnamed, beyond signaling their final confrontation: "The Enmity of Ages." The Time Lords assembled know what that means. The Doctor, who doctors, and the Master, who masters. And one constant word: The salvation of Gallifrey, the single point around which the Doctor revolves, the place his hearts are hidden: Earth.

The Master's problem isn't madness, not even the madness of war: it's his belief that there's a fundamental and insurmountable difference between him and anything else. The Master believes that he's alone. He is mistaken.

FIVE: A Wedding Everything that means anything is in the darkest and most neglected corners of your house, in the places you're not sure of. In the bug rooms and the cobweb corners, those are the things that keep you from being free. But the truth is that those things belong to you, helping to make up what you are, and by ignoring them, you give them so much power that you could have for yourself, as glory. What's horrible and wonderful depends a lot on your perspective. It depends on how big

your house is.

Now it's the Doctor strapped down, with the Master whispering into his ear. He calls out to himself, all 6,727,949,338 of him across the world. Still with no clue as to the real danger; to the untempered schism that drives him. The United Nations, UNIT, the Central Military Commission in Beijing. All the armies and all the strength; the Master winks lasciviously at Wilf as they count the soldiers. The Earth has become a war machine. "Nothing to say, Doctor? What's that? Pardon?" He leans into him, delighted, speaking right into the Doctor's taped-shut mouth: "Sorry?"

Wilf jerks angrily in his bonds: "You let him go, you swine!" The Master laughs. "Oh, your dad's still kicking up a fuss." Wilf says he'd be proud to be the Doctor's father, offended, and the Master shushes him jealously. "Listen to your Master." He turns back to the Doctor, but Wilf's phone chooses that moment to ring: it's Donna, terrified, surrounded by a man she can't remember. Behind every door is a face you haven't met yet. The Master grabs the phone and hears her voice; wonders why she didn't change. Wilf duly explains about the Metacrisis, and the Master campily recoils. "He loves playing with Earth girls. Ugh!" He sends himself after her, corralling them instantly to catch her. Wilf screams for her to run, but she's caught. And just before they catch her, she screams and burns, cutting loose with memory and rage, and drops the Masters all around her. She falls too, even as the Doctor's winking cheeky at the Master. "Did you think I'd leave my best friend without a defense mechanism?" He promises Wilf she'll be okay, and the Master starts in about the TARDIS.

"Evil can't look at itself." Evil is confusion of purpose. It's no coincidence that the Doctor defeats the Master when he's at his most powerful: that's him taking on the Master again for his own, by looking at him, by loving him, by letting him out of the box and back into the light.

"You could be so wonderful," the Doctor muses. "You're a genius. You're stone-cold brilliant. You are, I swear, you really are." The Master loves it. "But you could be so much more."

"You could be beautiful."

"With a mind like that? We could travel the stars, it would be my honor. Because you don't need to own the universe: Just see it." The Master stares at him. "To have the privilege of seeing the whole of time and space, that's ownership enough."

The Master allows himself the audacity of hope for a moment, and

wonders if the noise would stop. The Doctor promises he can help. *He read each wound, each weakness clear... And said -- Thou ailest here, and here.*

The truth of war is mere boys, firing on straw men, tears falling from their eyes. When we talk about the drums of war, when we talk about the sound of drums, this is the truth: Nobody ever wanted to be a villain, and nobody ever wanted to kill. They got there by cruel fate, and they must be loved.

"I don't know what I'd be without that noise," The Master says, tired. The clemency of madness.

"Wonder what I'd be," the Doctor says sadly, "Without you."

And for a moment the Master smiles, just a little less alone; thinks of the Gallifrey plains, under the sun. He swallows, and smiles. "Yeah."

The Master is another Reinette: Somebody who's walked the Doctor so completely that the edges go fuzzy. "We are the same."

FOUR: A BoyWilf asks about the drumbeats, and -- still gentled, for a moment -- the Master obliges.

"It began on Gallifrey. As children -- not that you'd call it childhood, more a life of duty -- eight years old. I was taken for initiation, to stare into the Untempered Schism." The Doctor explains how it's a gap, in the fabric of reality: "You can see into the Time Vortex itself."

And it hurts.

"Sometimes a child goes missing. Once in a generation, a boy will vanish from his homestead. I carved out his soul, and sat in his heart."

The Bad Wolf takes two things and makes them one, and this is the road that we all must walk; this Wolf just hollows you out and makes you ugly.

"They took me there. In the dark. I looked into time, old man. And I heard it. Calling to me. Drums... The never-ending drums."

He looks very young. And very sad.

"You burnt like the sun, but all I require is the moon."

"The Untempered Schism," Rassilon spits. "That's when it began." That's where it always begins. "History says the Master heard a rhythm. A torment that stayed with him for the rest of his life." A drumbeat. A

warrior's march. A symptom of insanity, like all war. The Visionary taps, again and again, with writing all over her skin: A rhythm of four. Rassilon leans forward, in his hate and his madness.

"The heartbeat of a Time Lord."

The Master is lost. He leans back in his chair, listening to it, glorying in it. The Doctor offers to go with him, to go and find it, and that sets the Master off. He stands, ecstatic; his brilliant mind burning beneath his skull. "The noise exists within my head. And now within six billion heads. Everyone on Earth can hear it. Imagine... Oh!" He shudders again, a skeleton, and the Doctor worries at him: He's still dying.

"This body was born out of death. All it can do is die. But what did you say to me, back in the wasteland? You said the end of time."

The Doctor corrects him: "I said something is returning." The Master wonders if that wasn't him, after all, in a different way: "The drumbeat is calling from so far away. From the end of time itself. And now it's been amplified six billion times. Triangulate all those signals, I could find its source! Oh Doctor. That's what your prophecy was. Me!" He slaps him again, terrifying, and starts in about the TARDIS again. The Doctor mourns; how close they came, for a moment.

"Just stop, just think," the Doctor begs, as the Master tells himself to kill Wilf. "Tell me where it is, or the old man is dead." Wilf begs him not to do it, offers to die himself, but the Doctor grins back: One of the guards is the Vinvocci scientist in disguise. Which is funny, because the whole point of having them in SWAT masks was silly and budgetary, but manages now to be essential. The scientist knocks him out, and Wilf yells, "God bless the cactuses," which is totally racist, and then they're off. They can't unbuckle him from the Hannibal Lecter contraption, so -- while the other Masters scramble and try to find them -- this merry band, the Doctor and Wilf and the two cactus people, have a mad dash around the castle and back downstairs, but before he can stop them, they've teleported all four back to their salvage spaceship, leaving the TARDIS far below.

Wilf wanders about, in love with space, while the Masters down below shut off their means of returning by shooting a big machine, and then -- since the Master has the entire nuclear power of the Earth at his disposal -- the Doctor sonics their spaceship dead. This pisses the awful Vinvocci off, but Wilf's sure that the Doctor's got a better plan. "I know you, though. I bet you've got a plan, haven't you? Eh? Come on!" Adorable:

"You've always got a trick up your sleeve. Nice little bit of the old Doctor flimflam, ha-ha-ha, sort of thing? Eh?" The Doctor just stares. "Oh, blimey."

They float, for a long time. Night has fallen. The Masters gather, and across the world they begin to listen. The drumbeat that distracts them and drives them mad, the untempered schism in us all, becomes their focus. And they find the source.

"The signal has been sent," the Time Lord reports to Rassilon. "A simple task of four beats transmitted back through time, and implanted in the Master's mind as a child." This links them to him, across Eight's Timelock, and then Rassilon somehow gets a tiny simple diamond across the link, a Gallifreyan Whitepoint star, plucked from his staff and tossed through time.

THREE: A GirlThe Doctor sees a burning, falling star in Earth's atmosphere down there; the Masters go running for it, and when they see what it is, they begin to exult. He raises his eyes to heaven and nearly weeps, but laughs instead. The skull beneath his skin growls and burns.

Wilf wanders the Vinvocci ship, and is once again surprised by his Time Lady messenger. "I think I'm lost," he says, and she smiles: "And yet you are found. Events are closing. The day is almost upon us. But tell me, old soldier. Did you take arms?" He shows her the gun and she nods. "This is the Doctor's final battle. At the end of his life, he must stand at arms, or lose himself and all this world, to the end of time." Wilf knows the Doctor carries no guns; how he hates them. "Who are you?" he asks, and she smiles sadly. "I was lost. So very long ago." And she is gone again.

Wilf sits down, sees the Doctor grimly working on some part of the ship, and tries his best to help. "D'you know, I've always dreamt of a view like that," he says, pointing down and cheering: "I'm an astronaut! It's dawn over England, look. Brand new day." The Doctor smiles, barely. He stares down. "My wife's buried down there. I might never visit her again, now. Do you think he changed them? In their graves?" The Doctor thinks on that. The slow path. "I'm sorry," he says, and Wilf just waves a hand. "Not your fault." The Doctor wonders.

Wilf shrugs. "1948, I was over there," he points. "End of the Mandate in Palestine. Private Mott. Skinny little idiot, I was. Stood on this rooftop, the middle of a skirmish... It was like a blizzard, all them bullets in the air. The world gone mad." All that chaos down below, just like Adelaide. "Yeah, you don't want to listen to an old man's tales, do you?" The Doctor

smiles sweetly at him finally, reminding him he's 906.

"We must look like insects to you," Wilf says, finally grasping a little bit of it, but the Doctor just stares at him lovingly. "I think you look like giants."

Wilf takes out the gun.

"Listen, I... I want you to have this. I've kept it all this time, and I thought..." The Doctor won't take it, of course. Wilf begs him, but he can't. "You had that gun in the mansion. You could have shot the Master there and then." Wilf shrugs, quietly. Eloquently. "Too scared, I suppose."

The Doctor watches him.

"I'd be proud." "Of what?" "If you were my dad." The tears spring up in his beautiful old eyes. "Oh, come on, don't start."

Wilf's namesake was a soldier, and a poet. Unafraid of love as he was of war. He was very beautiful, and died too young. He wrote once, "Above all I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity."

But then, if the prophecy said he's going to knock four times, that's obviously the knocking in the Master's head, so the Master is going to kill the Doctor. The Doctor nods. Then, Wilf reasons, think of his Time Lady, he just needs to kill the Master first.

"And that's how the Master started," the Doctor says. Wilf feels bad, even though he didn't say it as chasteningly as he would've anybody else. "It's not like I'm an innocent. I've taken lives. And I got worse: I got clever. Manipulated people into taking their own." He is ashamed. He goes darker than the Vinocci ship. "Sometimes I think a Time Lord lives too long."

Wilf looks at him, the hollow fear of him, and holds it out again. He'll deny you three times, that's how this works. Wilf's canny. "If the Master dies, what happens to all the people?" The Doctor pauses too long, before he lies that he doesn't know. "Doctor, *what happens?*" The template snaps, and everybody lives, and everybody goes back to normal. "Then don't you dare, sir. Don't you dare put him before them."

That's what he says, but not what he means. What he means is we're in dead man's alley, in the Age of Steel, and in that world you can't stay clean. You can try, you can hold to your ideals until the rats eat your bones. What he means is that the Doctor can't put himself, his godlike

innocence, above them all. Can't save Ianto when it means a crimson tithe. Can't shove that hardness off into Pete's World, like Ten Five, for being too ugly. Can't afford to stay above the fray, soft and uninvolved. You can't put those ideals before the innocent, without losing them altogether.

When I was a child I wanted to learn to play the guitar, just like my father. Until I learned what it would do to my fingers.

"Now you take this. That's an order, Doctor. Take the gun. You take the gun and save your life! And please don't die," Wilf says, beginning to weep. "You're the most wonderful man, and I don't want you to die."

"I want you safe. My Doctor." What if all the umbrellas in London actually were over your head? Wouldn't you feel safe then?

Wilf weeps. He reaches out for the Doctor's hand, placing it over his own. The Doctor looks into his eyes and, crying, swears he can't. That there are limits to how much we can change, no matter what the world does twisting around us.

"A star fell from the sky."

TWO: Joy"Don't you want to know where from?" the Master asks, broadcasting on every channel. "Because now it makes sense, Doctor. The whole of my life. My destiny. The star was a diamond. And the diamond is a Whitepoint star." The Doctor shakes beside old Wilf. "And I have worked all night, to sanctify that gift. Now the star is mine, I can increase the signal and use it as a lifeline. Do you get it now? Do you see? Keep watching, Doctor. This should be... Spectacular. Over and out."

The Doctor's fear becomes anger; he can barely explain to Wilf what the Master means. "It's the Time Lords. The Time Lords are returning." Wilf honestly thinks that's a good thing; nobody but the Doctor knows what they became. The Doctor picks up the gun, terrified at himself, getting dirty, and runs.

The Master holds his arms above his head, twirling, as the diamond activates in the Gate or whatever; the beat begins, four by four by four. The Doctor runs screaming into the Vinvocci chamber. Rassilon calls upon the Panopticon for a vote: "We die here, today, or return to the waking world and complete the Ultimate Sanction. For this is the hour when either Gallifrey falls, or Gallifrey rises!"

Gallifrey rises. Wilf wonders aloud: Weren't the Time Lords dead? Well, the Doctor explains about the Timelock, how he sealed them in a bubble forever. How they reached through time to drive the child Master mad, through the beating signal. "If they can follow the signal, they can escape before they die." Wilf offers to throw a party, and the Doctor shakes his head: "There will be no party." He admits to romanticizing the Time Lords, remembering the best of them, but admits that endless war has changed them forever. "You've seen my enemies, Wilf. The Time Lords are more dangerous than any of my enemies."

And isn't "God" just a fake out for the real God? Ask Milton.

The cactus woman acts annoying, which causes the Doctor to act annoying, and then there is a very, very long space fight sequence where he gets their ship up and running again and they head back toward the Naismith compound, shooting down all of Earth's missiles as they come flying, and Wilf gets to take up arms of his own and go generally *Star Wars* with a joystick gun, and he has a great deal of exciting fun, and the Master is frothing and there's a moment where you think the Doctor's going to crash the Vinocci ship right into the mansion -- which Wilf is pretty much okay with but just wants to know if he's about to die, and it's darling -- but at the last second the Doctor pulls his shit together and instead jumps out of the ship, gun in hand, and drops through the ceiling of the Gate room.

Meanwhile, the two Time Ladies who were against the return of Gallifrey (and didn't get blown up by Rassilon earlier) are the women standing on the platform with Rassilon and his two advisors, covering their eyes: "They will stand as monument to their shame, like the Weeping Angels of old." It's an immensely powerful image, as the vanguard of five prepares to reenter the universe on Earth.

ONE: Sorrow While Wilf fights with the cacti to return and help the Doctor, which they eventually do, Rassilon greets the Master, and the Doctor where he lies on the floor of the Gate room, surrounded in shattered glass.

"It is a fitting paradox that our salvation comes at the hands of our most infamous child," Rassilon says, and the Master grins. The Doctor tries to warn them about the Immortality Gate, and the Master shushes him, childlike and scary at once. "Hey, no, hey! That's mine. Hush."

He points around the room, gesturing toward the Time Lords. "Look around you. I've transplanted myself into every single human being. But

who wants a mongrel little species like them? Because now I can transplant myself into every single Time Lord." Rassilon shivers.

"Oh yes, Mr. President sir. Standing there all noble and resplendent -- and decrepit -- think how much better you're going to look... As me!"

The Untempered Schism. The revolution of the infamous child. So many of us, too many of us, lose ourselves to that. We take on rebellion against the Age of Steel like it's the only alternative; we go hard just like everybody else. There's a lot to be angry about, and it's a better option but not the best option. Because the secret beneath is that it's still the Lords that did it: They drove him crazy. It's their madness he's expressing. And these are the options, for every one of us: To go mad with rage against authority, and let that be your cage. To go traveling, never letting any of it touch you. Staying innocent and young, never admitting where you come from and where you live, terrified of going hard. Or to do the third thing: To follow Wilf into the future, along the path where nothing is lost. **Nothing inside must die for us to be healed.**

We dream of cages, where nothing is permitted.

And to prove it -- to show that this is just another cage -- Rassilon turns back the template with a wave of his glove, healing all of Earth with a thought. He orders humanity to its knees, and the Master desperately tries to get on the other side of them again. "That's fine, that's good, because you said salvation! I still saved you, don't forget that." He shivers. Rassilon stares up, through the broken ceiling, to the sky. "The approach begins."

The Master asks the Doctor what he means, and the Doctor is exasperated: "Something is returning. Don't you ever listen? That was the prophecy: Not someone, *something*." As the light goes wild all around them, he explains: "They're not just bringing back the species. It's Gallifrey. Right here, right now." And Gallifrey leaps into being above Earth, red and burning.

The recovered Shaun looks around for Donna; outside, a sort of earthquake shakes the world. A purple-jumper guy with RTD's glasses and very little else in common with RTD goes running past, and out in the street Sylvia Noble looks up, begging for the Doctor's help. The cacti prepare to get the eff out of there, since Earth's about to be knocked out of Earth; the female points out that the Doctor said he was going to die anyway, and they bounce.

As everybody runs and the shit is going to hell, the Master's still begging for credit. Rassilon just smiles at him; out on the lawn the Naismiths stare up at Gallifrey. Inside, a kid is stuck inside the intricate nuclear booth, so of course Wilf runs in there to hit the opposite button so he can get free, even as the Doctor begs him not to.

The Master stares up.

Hell is the difference between simile and metaphor.

"But this is fantastic, isn't it? The Time Lords restored?"

The Doctor is still on his knees.

What happens if you draw the line from Mercy to Justice and then just keep drawing until you're off the page and then off your desk and on into the dark places: God as Wave of Mutilation.

"You weren't there. In the final days of the War. You never saw what was born. If the Timelock's broken, everything's coming through. Not just the Daleks, but the Skaro Degradations, the Horde of Travesties, the Nightmare Child, the Could-Have-Been King with his Army of Meanwhiles and Never-weres... The War turned into hell. And that's what you opened, right above the Earth. Hell is descending."

The Master grins: "My kind of world." But the Doctor's not done. Even the Time Lords, they know, can't survive that. It's not their endgame.

"We will initiate the Final Sanction," Rassilon declares. "The end of time will come. At my hand. The rupture will continue, until it rips the Time Vortex apart."

The Master is offended: "That's suicide." Rassilon nods.

"We will ascend, to become creatures of consciousness alone. Free of these bodies, free of time, and cause and effect, while creation itself ceases to be." The Master is amazed.

"That's what they were planning in the final days of the War," chokes the Doctor. "I had to stop them."

The end of time means no more trouble. The Age of Steel is cold and unchanging. And without time, without change, everything dies. When nothing changes, everything dies. The fight the Doctor's been up against for five years: Cassandra, the Face of Boe, the fixed point of Jack Harkness. All of it a memory of what the Time Lords made him do.

Nothing is more offensive than suicide, not even entropy. But this wouldn't be heat death: It would be cold.

"Then... Take me with you, Lord President. Let me ascend into glory," the Master smiles, and hopes.

"You are diseased," Rassilon says, "Albeit a disease of our own making."

The Master's feelings are hurt; Rassilon raises his glove to kill him, but the Doctor's had enough, and cocks the gun at the President of Gallifrey. "Choose your enemy well. We are many. The Master is but one."

And from the other side, the temptation: "But he's the President," the Master hisses. "Kill him, and Gallifrey could be yours."

The Doctor immediately turns the gun on the Master: That's too gross even to consider. And, as the Master quickly figures out, he's still the link. Kill the Master, and the Time Lords and Gallifrey snap back to the Timelock. "You never would, you coward," the Master says, dying before him. Goading him. Hoping he will. "Go on then. Do it." He stamps his foot madly, but the Doctor can't do it. The Master shakes his head, sadly.

The Doctor swings back around on the President, since he's the other end of the link, and Rassilon nearly laughs in his face. "The final act of your life is murder. But which one of us?"

Impossible choices. He breathes, as Wilf watches, terrified by what he is about to become. The hollowness he invokes. Because there is a way in which the narrative brings itself about. There is a way in which he invokes this. The Master comes to the Doctor when he's called. When the Doctor gets too power-mad, the Master snaps into being. He forced Adelaide into impossible choices, and the madness of the Master brings Gallifrey through. In the Age of Steel there is no grace, no third way, no possible way to move forward without getting your hands dirty. No direction you can jump.

As the TARDIS sings, Wilf's Time Lady lowers her hands, and meets the Doctor's gaze. Her son.

Her eyes well up with light, a weeping angel. Wilf stands behind him, and the Time Lady before. The best humanity can offer, and the best of Gallifrey. The soft world, and the hard. They meet in him. There is always a better way. Nothing in us must die to heal the world.

The Doctor points the gun at the Master, telling him to duck, and after a

second he grins and does so, and the Doctor shoots the Whitepoint star. Its machine goes up in sparks. The link to Hell is broken. Her hair goes white as she covers her eyes and Rassilon takes aim... And the Master strikes him, with all the electricity in his dying body, sparking and skeletal, blasting toward him. Lit up like an idiot's lantern.

"You did this to me! All of my life! You made me!"

He blasts Rassilon four times, to his knees; they grow faint and vanish, and Gallifrey disappears from the sky.

While on Earth they are rejoicing, and the Master's vanished once again, the Doctor lies on the floor, in a pile of glass.

"I'm alive," he whispers, afraid to break the spell.

"I've... There was..."

He is so joyous, laughing or crying, face against the shattered glass: "*I'm still alive.*" He nearly collapses again, laughing weakly. And hears the knocking.

The dread comes slowly, across his face. One, two, three, four. He closes his mouth carefully, stiffening his lip, finally looking. He is so brave.

Wilf stands in the nuclear bolt, knocking softly against the glass. One, two, three, four.

He waves, embarrassed. "They've gone, then? Good-oh. If you could let me out?"

The Doctor nods, sadly. "Yeah."

("Oh shit," Steve choked, suddenly so angry. "I don't have to! I could stay! I can do what I want!" The cough of an obsolete engine. "Because you need me, you lot need me!" Just embarrassing himself, now. "Power mad? That's the time to go.")

It's making noise. It's been running since the Master brought the Time Lords through. The Gate is gone. The feedback's in overload. "All the excess radiation gets vented inside there," the Doctor says, his voice breaking just a little. "Vinvocci glass. Contains it, all 500,000 rads about to flood that thing."

Wilf tries to be polite, hurrying the Doctor along.

"Except it's gone critical," the Doctor says sadly, and Wilf's smile falls. He

understands. "Touch one control and it floods. Even this would set it off," he says, holding up his screwdriver. Wilf gets scared. "I'm sorry. Look, just leave me." The Doctor grins angrily, tears in his eyes. Not a chance. "Okay, right then," he jokes, and turns away.

"Because you had to go in there, didn't you? You had to go and get stuck, oh yes! Because that's who you are, Wilfred. You were always this. Waiting for me all this time."

Wilf waves his arms, frantically trying to stop him going there: "Oh really, just leave me. I'm an old man, Doctor. I've had my time."

"Well, exactly," the Doctor spits. "Look at you. Not remotely important. *But me!* I could do so much more," he shouts, pounding his chest. Disgusted with his fear. "*So much more!* But this is what I get. My reward." The Doctor shoves some shit off a table, then realizes he's embarrassing himself. There's a sweet old man in there, and no chance he isn't going to save him. He shudders, in his shame: "Lived too long."

Wilf begins to scream.

The Doctor won't listen, can't, as Wilf begs him not to die. Over and over again, screaming and weeping, full of love.

"Wilfred," the Doctor says, as he opens up his cage, "It's my honor."

He thinks he's being brave; he's not. He's beautiful, and lonely, and exactly what it says on the tin: An angel and a God of Loneliness, and Kindness, and strength. A lonely boy, who learned to worship dancing, before he lost his shoes. A boy who has to make this work on his own, alone from even memory. A man, like any other: A nearly unchartable, a technically unmappable, labyrinth of corridors, and mirrors, and doors, and gates, and tapestries. And fireplaces.

The Doctor's cage goes red, all around him; it hits his stomach, first, and he doubles over and collapses. He groans, on the floor of his cage, as his body burns. The world catches fire.

ZEROThe bolt shuts itself off in due time; the Doctor unknots his fingers from his own hair. He pushes himself to standing as Wilf stares and says a quiet hello. He stares around, like he's just woken: "Hi." The system's gone; he absorbed all the radiation, the door pops open at a touch, which gives him a bitter little life. Wilf points at the scratches across his face and with a touch he puts them right. His unblemished face falls, as his heart breaks: It's started.

Wilfred Mott throws his arms around the Doctor, and holds him very close. The Doctor rests there.

On Earth Shaun's trying desperately to wake Donna; he worries that it's hypothermia. Sylvia can't get A&E on the phone because of course everybody's calling, and finally she hears the TARDIS. Donna wakes, and laughs, and outside Wilf is getting down from the TARDIS. "Oh, she's smiling," the Doctor shudders. "As if today wasn't bad enough." Wilf laughs, and sniffs, turning toward his daughter.

"Don't go thinking this is goodbye, Wilf. I'll see you again, one more time. Just keep looking. I'll be there." Wilf asks where he's going; a smile plays around the edges of his sadness.

"To get my reward." **The etymology for the name "Orpheus" is really hard to pin down. "To be deprived"; "to put asunder, to separate." "Darkness," orphanos, "to lament, sing wildly, cast a spell." Orpheus was defined by loss and the failure of faith. You look back -- at the end of life -- and if you're not willing to give it up at that moment, you never deserved it in the first place.**

Martha runs through an abandoned lot, awesome braids swirling around her head, fighting a Sontaran. Mickey covers her as she breaks down an alley, yelling at her to stay behind. "You looked like you needed help. Besides, you're the one who persuaded me to go freelance!" Mickey laughs. "Yeah, but we're being fired at by a Sontaran. A dumpling with a gun!" He takes her into his arms. "And this is no place for a married woman." They laugh, and kiss, and as a disgusting Sontaran licks his lips and takes aim at them, the Doctor downs him with a cartoon mallet. Martha looks up as Mickey plans their next move, and spots him. He doesn't smile, or wave. Just looks at them, lovingly, long enough they'll know this is it. She takes Mickey in her arms, and they weep.

He can inspire, and he can love, but nobody on this earth can change you. Nobody ever made you greater, and nobody ever made you crawl.

Luke runs across the street, talking on his phone -- Sarah Jane's got some story going about how wi-fi went mad all over the world and everybody was hallucinating -- and narrowly misses being hit by a car. The Doctor whips him out of the way, and Luke runs shouting to his mother. She looks across the way, and sees her Doctor, shining in the sun. They wave, and she smiles, and weeps for him. Not sad, not happy for anything but

to have seen him at the end. Her smile says hello, and goodbye, and the same time. Her biggest smile.

It's the humanity in the Doctor, which Martha and all the Companions have forged and will continue to forge, that keep him on the path. Life is balance and it's a constant working: Grace is a wave that never breaks.

Tallulah's song for Diagoras plays in an alien cantina, where many races from the last five years can be found. Jack Harkness sits at the bar, a thousand miles from Gwen and all that death, and the bartender brings him a note from the Doctor. He looks up, shocked, and locks eyes with him: The Doctor salutes. He knows now what it's like: To be hard, to be soft. To be a man. He has forgiven Jack for that, and so much more. *His name is Alonso*, the note reads, and the Doctor gestures to Jack's left, just as Midshipman Frame sits down, still in his *Titanic* uniform. *Allons-y*.

Stories end, and you don't. In those tiny moments of grace to which you tend, if you have the grace to accept them, at those rare times in the angle of the light where the words reach out and lift you up, you are touching something bigger than anything that could ever harm or stop you. You are the Bad Wolf.

Pretty Verity explains to a Pegg knockoff about her great-grandmother, Joan Redfern. She bears a startling resemblance, of course. "She was a nurse in 1913, and she fell in love with this man called John Smith. Except he was a visitor... From another world. She fell in love with a man from the stars. And she wrote it all down." She slides the book across the table -- *The Journal Of Impossible Things* -- and thanks him for buying it. The next man asks her to sign it for "The Doctor." She smiles, until she meets his eyes. She takes him in.

"Was she happy? In the end?"

Verity smiles. Of course she was. She was wonderful.

"Were you?"

He smiles. She watches him go.

Somewhere in space and time there's a singular entity whose Companions and collections and victories comprise a history, an infinity of windows into time. Whose halls and memories and fears have been walked by a select few.

Bells at a church, after the wedding's ended: It's the Temple-Nobles! She screams a lot, abusing Nerys -- "You made me wear peach." *That's because you are a peach. Furry skin, stone inside, going off* -- and shoving everybody around to get their pictures taken while Sylvia and Wilf look on, leading the cheers and weeping for joy. Minnie goes after Wilf one more time, as Sylvia sees the Doctor, just beyond the garden.

"And here you are, same old face. Didn't I tell you you'd be all right? Oh!" Wilfred claps, as unselfconscious in his joy as in his sorrow. "They've arrested Mr. Naismith. It was on the news. Crimes undisclosed. And his daughter. Both of them, locked up. But I keep thinking, Doctor, there's one thing you never told me. That woman. Who was she?"

The Doctor stares at Sylvia, then Donna. It's enough of an answer.

Thou hast no right to bliss.

"I just wanted to give you this," he says, handing over an envelope. "Wedding present. Thing is, I never carry money. So I just popped back in time, borrowed a quid off a really lovely man." He looks Sylvia in the eye: "Geoffrey Noble, his name was." Sylvia's eyes fill up. "Have it, Geoffrey said. "Have that on me."

Wilf thanks him for that one; Sylvia nearly kisses him for thanks. They run back to Donna, handing the envelope over. "Oh, don't tell me, it's a bill. Just what I need, right now. A lottery ticket?" Wilfred and Sylvia stare at each other. "What a cheap present. Who was that? Still, you never know, it's a triple rollover this week, I might get lucky." She shoves it into her bra and runs back to Shaun.

It's her wedding day. Every dream can come true, now. Every trip and every mystery is now in reach.

*Yet they, believe me, who await
No gifts from Chance, have conquer'd
Fate*

Wilf cries, and blows him a kiss. He can't even wave goodbye.

You couldn't be allowed to remember it. We can never remember it.
Every one of us has touched that, and every one of us has forgotten it.
And the hole that it leaves is the song that we share.

:)It's New Year's Eve, 2005. Rose and Jackie are in a rush, thanks to Jackie's boyfriend Jimbo, who said he'd give them a lift before his axel broke. "Mickey'll be calling me everything. This is your fault... Get rid of

him, Mum, he's useless." Jackie points out that A) Rose is with a mechanic, and B) That she'll never do better at this point. Rose reaches out and touches her mother's hair softly, lovingly. "Don't be like that. You never know. There could be someone out there." **Once there were a couple of London kids, named Peter Tyler and Jackie Prentiss.**

Jackie wishes her daughter a happy New Year and runs off to party. The Doctor watches Rose run past, trying to be quiet, but it's coming too soon. He groans at just the wrong time, bending with it, and she hears. "You all right, mate? Too much to drink?"

Something like that.

"Maybe it's time you went home."

Maybe so. Maybe it's time.

"Anyway... Happy New Year!" He asks what year it is, and she laughs when she tells him.

Once there was a girl named Rose Tyler. "Tell you what. I bet you're going to have a really great year." He promises, and she grins hugely before running off to find Mickey. And he is all alone.

He stumbles in the street, moaning with tears in his eyes, finally dropping in the snow near the TARDIS. Sigma appears once again.

"We will sing to you, Doctor. The universe will sing you to your sleep."

The TARDIS takes him in her arms, and the universe sings him to his rest. The traveler's halt. And in the music, in the unbroken circle, he stands once again. They sing for him. **Once they were slaves.**

The Doctor removes his overcoat, as his hand begins to bleed pure light. He sets the engines running, yet once more. Up, up, up.

"I don't want to go," he says quietly, and begins to shine.

Once there was a boy, loom-born and Academy-taught, who went out into the world with a magical machine, and had adventures. And one day Gallifrey burned, and the Time Lords died, and the Daleks were gone, and Arcadia fell. And I'm pretty sure he died that day, too.

The Doctor erupts into starlight as the TARDIS comes down around him. **ELEVEN: Health** The Doctor looks like my ex-boyfriend. He probably looks like yours, too. He's lovely, and crazy-looking. The Doctor has legs. Arms,

hands. Fingers. Two ears, two eyes. Long hair, like a girl. Quite a strong chin. Still not ginger. And he is headed for the Earth, speeding, crashing. He cheers himself ever on: Geronimo. Some new man goes sauntering away. He was so afraid. But imagine that much love. If the loud, crashing, bright scary thing that was coming to get you was God all along. And He was only coming to take you home.